

BT

812

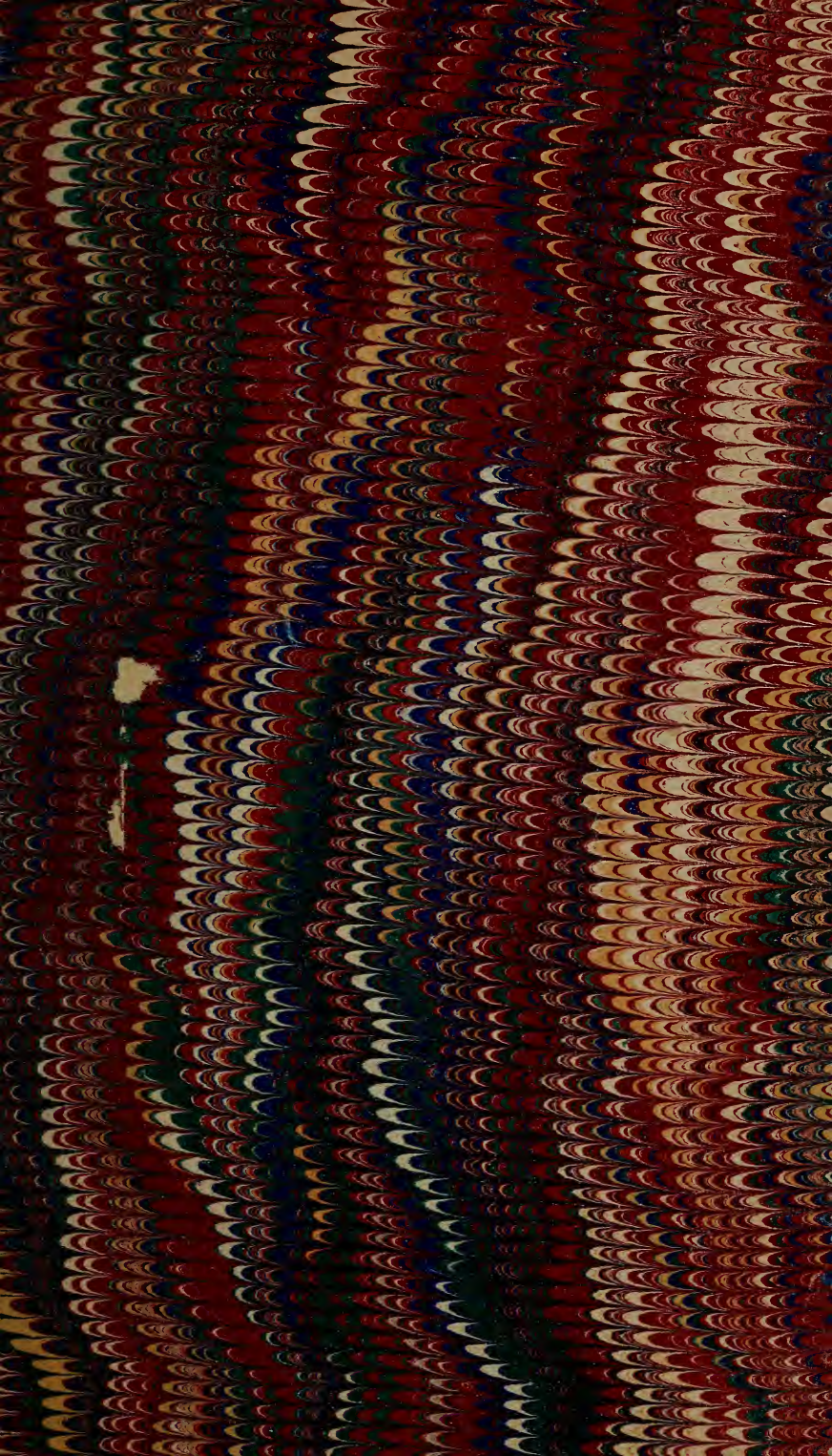
.T5

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

Chap. BT812

Shelf .T5

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.



L. D. Profford

ARMINIANISM EXAMINED:

A

REVIEW

OF

"A DISCOURSE ON PREDESTINATION AND ELECTION,

**PREACHED ON AN ESPECIAL OCCASION, AT GREENWICH,
MASSACHUSETTS,**

BY WILBUR FISK, D.D."

Then Principal of the Wesleyen Academy, Wilbraham, Mass.; now of the
Methodist Seminary, Middletown, Connecticut.

BY REV. TYLER THACHER.

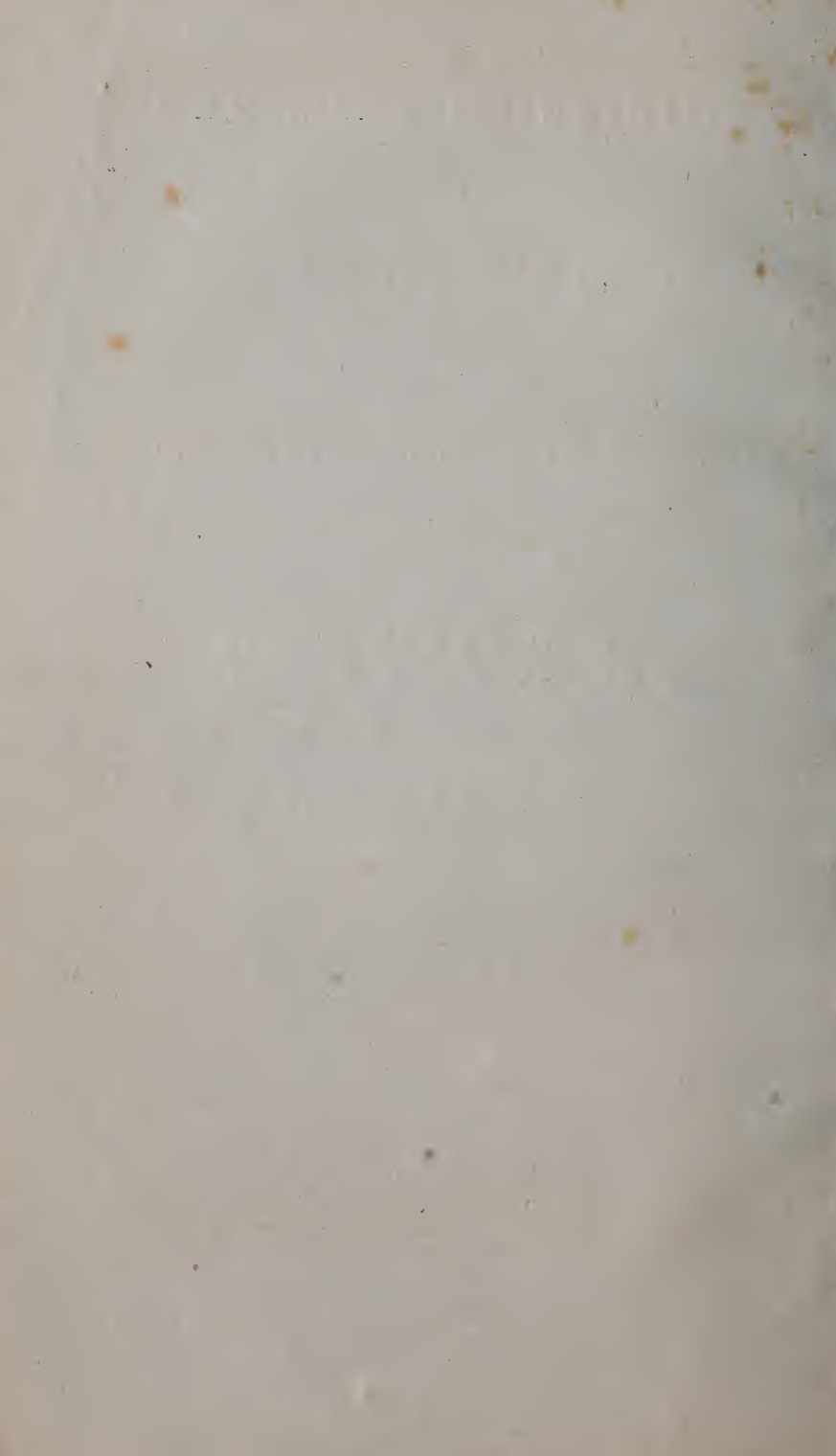


BOSTON:

PUBLISHED BY PEIRCE & PARKER, 9, CORNHILL.

Chapman, printer—over 26, State street.

1833.



ARMINIANISM EXAMINED.

A

REVIEW

OF

"A DISCOURSE ON PREDESTINATION AND ELECTION,

PREACHED ON AN ESPECIAL OCCASION, AT GREENWICH,
MASSACHUSETTS,

BY WILBUR FISK, D. D."

Then Principal of the Wesleyan Academy, Wilbraham, Mass.; now of the Methodist
Seminary, Middletown, Conn.

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN THE BOSTON TELEGRAPH.

BY REV. TYLER THACHER.



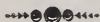
BOSTON:

PUBLISHED BY PEIRCE AND PARKER, 9, CORNHILL.
Chapman, printer—over 26, State st.

1833.

BT 812
T5

ARMINIANISM EXAMINED.



NUMBER I.

THIS discourse has already received an uncommon share of public attention. The ability with which the Sermon is written, and the celebrity of its author, have given it a pretty extensive circulation; and it is thought by many that Dr. Fisk has, in this discourse put the subject of Predestination and Election forever at rest; and that Arminianism has now gained a complete and decisive victory. It is my object in this, and in several succeeding numbers, to inquire into the merits of this discourse.

The text is contained in Eph. i. 4, 5.

"According as He hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love. Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ, to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will."

Dr. F. thus begins his discourse :

"In this passage, the kindred doctrines of predestination and election are brought into view. To discuss them, to notice some errors respecting them, and to exhibit what is believed to be the scriptural and rational view of these doctrines, is the proposed object of the present discourse."

Dr. F. enters upon his subject by boldly "examining—

I. Predestination in general—

II. Predestination, in its particular relation to the doctrine of election.

I. By predestination, we understand an efficient predetermination to bring about or accomplish any future event. But as God alone has knowledge to comprehend futurity, and power to direct and control future events, predestination, in a *proper* and *strict* sense, can only be used in reference to Him. And with respect to God, predestination is that efficient determination which he has maintained from eternity, respecting the control, direction, and destiny of the laws, events and creatures of the universe."

But what does Dr. F. mean by an *efficient* "predetermination"? The Dr.'s definition appears to confound the Divine decrees with the Divine Agency. But these, though inseparably connected, are entirely distinct from each other. Predestination is, indeed, predetermination. But the Divine predeterminations are not the *efficient cause* of any thing. The efficiency lies altogether in that Divine agency which carries those predeterminations into execution. The Dr. proceeds:

"That God had a predetermination of this kind, there can be no doubt, and therefore, on this fact, there can be no dispute. But the ground of controversy is, the unlimited extent to which some have carried this idea of predestination. Calvin, on this subject, says—"Every action and motion of every creature, is governed by the hidden counsel of God, so that nothing can come to pass, but was ordained by him." The Assembly's Catechism is similar—"God did, from all eternity, unchangeably ordain whatever comes to pass." And Mr. Buck defines predestination to mean, "The decree of God, whereby he hath, for his own glory, fore-ordained whatever comes to pass." With these definitions which, it is seen, are the same in substance, agree all the Calvinistic divines in Europe and America. To this view of predestination, others, and we confess ourselves of that number, have objected. We believe, that the character and acts of intelligent beings, so far at least, as their moral accountability is concerned, are not definitely fixed and efficiently produced, by the unalterable purpose and efficient decree of God. Here, therefore, we are at issue."

On this passage I would just remark, that I know of no Calvinistic divines, who believe that either human actions or any other events are "efficiently produced by the unalterable purpose and efficient decree of God." Calvinistic divines, it is presumed, do not generally thus confound the Divine decrees with the Divine agency. Dr. F. however, evidently means to deny that God has decreed any of the moral exercises and actions of his creatures; and that He causes any of their moral exercises and actions by his own agency. For he says:

"We believe, with the rigid predestinarians, that God hath fixed the laws of the physical and moral world, and that he hath a general plan, suited to all the various circumstances and contingencies of his government: but that it is no part of this plan, efficiently to control and actuate the human will."

Dr. F. then does not believe that it is proper to say to either saints or sinners as Paul did, "It is God that worketh in you to will and to do of his good pleasure," seeing "it is no part of this plan efficiently to control and actuate the human will." He does not believe that God seriously *intends* that "His people *shall* be

willing in the day of his power"; for this would make it a part of the Divine plan to control and actuate the human will. According to Dr. F. then, regeneration and sanctification do not "efficiently control and actuate the human will": they do not *produce* love nor repentance, nor faith, nor any voluntary exercises whatever. According to Dr. F. nothing of this kind is any part of the Divine plan. Dr. F. believes "that God hath a general plan, suited to all the various circumstances, and contingencies of his government." By "contingencies" I conclude that Dr. F. means events which take place by chance, or events which depend on no cause out of themselves; and among these, I presume he would include all the voluntary exercises and actions of mankind, which p. 16, he ascribes to a "self-determining principle of the will." Now what does Dr. F. mean by that 'general plan which is suited to all these various contingencies'? Does he mean merely that it is God's plan to reward his creatures accordingly as they shall chance to be obedient, and to punish them accordingly as they shall chance to be disobedient? If their obedience and disobedience be contingent, or depend upon mere chance, it is difficult to conceive how God's plan of Government can ever settle the destinies of any of his creatures. For should men chance to repent to-day, they may chance to commit the unpardonable sin to-morrow. Should they chance to be fit for heaven at death, they may chance to rebel as did the fallen angels after they had entered the abodes of the blessed. The very idea of chance or contingency in events which take place, precludes the idea of fore-knowledge and even of conjecture concerning them. The very idea then of a plan which is suited to contingencies is absurd. A plan suited to contingencies is a plan suited to chance. And a plan suited to chance is a plan suited to incalculable and innumerable uncertainties.

But what does Dr. F. mean by God's having a "general plan"? Does he believe that God governs the moral world? He says, "We believe with the rigid predestinarians, that God hath fixed the laws of the physical and moral world." What then does Dr. F. mean by the "laws of the moral world"? Does he mean those laws which govern the voluntary conduct of mankind? If "it is no part of God's plan efficiently to control and actuate the human will," it is difficult to see how God can be said to govern the voluntary con-

duct of mankind at all; or how He can be said to exercise any proper government over the moral world. Perhaps Dr. F. will say, God governs the moral world by motives, rewards and punishments. But if God governs his creatures in this way only, his government would be extremely limited. These motives, rewards and punishments, must not come through human instrumentality, but directly and immediately from the hand of God. For He cannot be said to dispense them through human instrumentality unless he governs that instrumentality by controlling the human will. Besides, how can God be said to *govern* mankind at all, even by motives, rewards and punishments, if "it is no part of his plan efficiently to control and actuate the human will"? What kind of *government* over mankind is that, which does not control the human will? Will Dr. F. say that God governs nations and kingdom? It is readily admitted that 'God reigns in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth'; that 'the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord; and He turneth it whithersoever He will.' But it is difficult to conceive how He can govern nations without governing the individuals who compose them; or how He can govern either rulers or subjects without controlling the human will.

Dr. Fisk applies the term *ultra-predestinarians* to Calvinists. Whether he has thereby done justice to Calvinists, or to his own reputation I shall not at present undertake to determine.

Dr. F. proposes first to hear and answer the arguments in defence of the Calvinistic system, and then to bring up arguments against it. He says,

"The supporters of this system (the Calvinistic) endeavor to establish their views by a three-fold argument. The fore-knowledge of God—the necessity of a plan—and Scripture testimony."

He then undertakes to state the first argument. He says,

"The first argument is founded on fore-knowledge. It is sometimes contended that predestination and fore-knowledge are the same. This however by the more judicious is not now insisted on";

He should have said never was insisted on by the more judicious, but always denied by them. After clearly refuting this error, the Dr. observes,

"The more common and plausible argument is, that the fore-knowledge of God necessarily *implies* predestination. "For how," they ask, "can an action that is really come to pass, be foreseen, if it be not determined? God fore-knew every thing from the beginning, but this he

could not have known, if he had not so determined it." "God," says Piscator, "foresees nothing but what he has decreed, and his decree precedes his knowledge." And Calvin says, "God therefore foreknows all things that will come to pass, because he has decreed they shall come to pass."

After this brief statement of the argument, Dr. F. undertakes to refute it.

"But to this idea, (he says,) there are insuperable objections. Prescience is an essential attribute of the Divine nature. But a determination to do this or that is not essential to the Divine nature."

But how does it appear that the prescience or fore-knowledge of God, is more essential to the Divine nature than his determinations are? Take away his fore-knowledge and He ceases to be God; and take away his wise and benevolent determinations and He ceases to be God. But Dr. F. undertakes to prove this point by a put case. He shall speak for himself.—"For ought we can see, God might determine to make a particular planet, or not to make it, and in either case, the perfection of his nature is not affected." But how does this prove that Divine determinations are not essential to the Divine nature? Should God determine to make a particular planet or not to make it; in either case He must have some determination. It is essential to the Divine nature that God should have a determination on the subject, either that the planet should exist or not exist. It is equally essential to the Divine nature that God should make that determination respecting it, which is wisest and best. And the same may be said of every other event supposable. How does it appear, then, that the Divine decrees are not as essential to the Divine nature, as the divine fore-knowledge? In the case which Dr. F. has put, the Divine fore-knowledge can extend no farther than the Divine decrees. Had God determined to create a particular planet, He would have fore-known its existence. Had He determined not to create it, he could not have fore-known its existence, but must have fore-known its non-existence. His fore-knowledge, therefore, in this case, must have been both commensurate with his decree and founded upon it. The Dr. proceeds.—

"But to *know* is so essential to Him, that the moment he ceases to know all that is, or might be, under any possible contingency, he ceases to be God."

It is freely admitted, that God cannot cease to fore-know those future events which he has decreed without ceasing to be God

But it is by no means clear that he must cease to be God by not fore-knowing future events which come into existence under a "contingency," or by chance. It is no less absurd to suppose that Omniscience can foresee events which are absolutely *uncertain*; than that Omnipotence can produce events which are absolutely *impossible*. Omniscience can no more effect a contradiction than Omnipotence. But let us hear Dr. F. a little further—

"Is it not absurd, then, to say the least, to make an essential attribute of Deity depend upon the *exercise* of his attributes?—the divine prescience depend upon his decrees and determinations?"

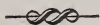
But there is no more propriety in calling the Divine fore-knowledge an essential attribute of Deity, than in calling his decrees such. Both necessarily *flow* from the Divine attributes; but neither of them constitutes an essential attribute of Deity. The determination of God is an exercise of his heart, and his foresight or fore-knowledge is an exercise of his understanding. There is a difference between the essential knowledge of God and his fore-knowledge. His essential knowledge comprehends his own perfections, and thereby all things *possible*. But his fore-knowledge comprehends his own decrees, and thereby all future events. The Dr. says:

"It would seem by this argument, that, if not in the order of time, at least, in the order of thought, and in the order of cause and effect, the exercises of an attribute preceded the attribute itself; and in short, the attribute must be exercised as a cause to bring it into existence! To this monstrous conclusion we are led by following out this argument."

This is, indeed, a "monstrous conclusion;" and it is difficult to see how a man of Dr. Fisk's *ability* and *ingenuousness* should be led to it by following out the argument. The Dr.'s argumentation is substantially as follows: If the Divine fore-knowledge depends upon the Divine decrees, then the Divine fore-knowledge evidently depends upon itself; and is the cause of its own existence: since decrees and fore-knowledge are one and the same thing. This is the only way conceivable, in which the Dr. could come at this "monstrous conclusion." It appears, therefore, from the Dr.'s own reasoning, that, "It is sometimes contended, that predestination and fore-knowledge are the same." Still, we *had* supposed that, with the Dr. himself, p. 5.

"This however by the more judicious is not now insisted on. For it is self-evident, that *to know* and *to decree* are distinct operations; and to every one acquainted with the common definition of the terms, they

must convey distinct and different ideas. And if these are distinct ideas in the *human* mind, they must be also in the divine mind, unless it can be shown that these terms, when applied to God have an entirely different meaning from that by which they are understood among men. And as this cannot be pretended," it is no wonder that the Dr. was sensible that he had been led to a "moustrous conclusion."



NUMBER II.

In my preceding number, I took notice of Dr. Fisk's "monstrous conclusion," that if the Divine fore-knowledge be founded upon the Divine decrees, then "the exercises of an attribute preceded the attribute itself; in short, the attribute must be exercised as a cause to bring it into existence;" that is, to found fore-knowledge upon decrees, is the same as to found it upon its own exercises. After Dr. F. has conducted us to this "monstrous conclusion" we need not be greatly surprised, at finding immediately

"connected with it another, equally monstrous and absurd. If God must predetermine events in order to know them, then, as the cause is in no case dependent on the effect, the decrees of God must be passed and his plan contrived, independently of his knowledge, which only had an existence as the effect of these decrees."

In this last conclusion Dr. F. takes it for granted that *all* the knowledge of God consists in *fore-knowledge*. So that if his decrees in the order of nature, be antecedent to his *fore-knowledge*, they must be antecedent to *all* his knowledge. But the truth is, the Decrees of God may be, and really are, founded in his *essential* knowledge and wisdom, notwithstanding his *fore-knowledge* is founded upon his decrees. Dr. F. goes on to say,

"What must be the character of that plan and of those decrees, which were formed and matured without knowledge, we will not stop to examine, for the idea borders too closely upon the ludicrous, to be dwelt upon in a serious discourse. And yet I cannot see how this conclusion can be avoided, reasoning from such premises."

The "premises" are, that God fore-knew all things from eternity; and that his fore-knowledge *must* be founded upon decrees. The conclusion which Dr. F. 'cannot see how to avoid' is, that "the decrees of God must be passed, and his plan contrived independently of his *knowledge*."—How Dr. F., with all his shrewdness, can avoid seeing how to avoid this conclusion, "we will not stop to examine, for the idea borders too closely upon the ludicrous, to be dwelt upon

in a serious" review. "It seems to us," as well as the Dr. perfectly "consistent, to consider that, in the order of cause and effect, the exercise of the divine attributes is consequent upon their existence; and that the plan of the Almighty is the result of his infinite knowledge; and that the decrees of his throne flow forth from the eternal fountain of his wisdom. This idea, moreover, accords with the scripture—"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate, to be conformed to the image of his son." "Elect according to the fore-knowledge of God the Father." Dr. F. says, "In these passages predestination and the decree of election, are most clearly founded on fore-knowledge. This, therefore, must settle the question. God fore-knows in order to predestinate; but he does not predestinate in order to fore-know."

Fore-knowledge is not always used in one and the same sense. It sometimes refers to the *nature* of future events, and sometimes to their actual existence. God fore-knows future events in both these senses. He fore-knows what events will be for the best on the whole, and He fore-knows what events will actually come to pass. In the first sense, the Divine fore-knowledge means the same as the dictates of Divine wisdom. In this sense, it is freely admitted, that the divine decrees are founded in the divine fore-knowledge. He fore-knew from eternity what events would be for the best, and determined that they should come to pass; and thus He fore-knew their actual existence. In the first sense, the fore-knowledge of God is the foundation of his decrees, and in the last sense it is founded on his decrees. Fore-knowledge is doubtless to be understood in the first sense explained, in the passages which have just been quoted. It may be said consistently with truth and fact, that "those whom God fore-knew it would be best to predestinate; them he did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." It is also in the same sense, that the elect are "elect according to the fore-knowledge of God the Father." God fore-knew it would be *best* to elect them, and therefore actually did elect them according to this fore-knowledge of what was wisest and best. But this is not the sense in which Dr. F. means to be understood. For as he means to destroy the argument of the Calvinists, he must of course intend to be understood as insisting that the Divine decrees are founded on that *kind* of fore-knowledge which respects not the nature merely, but the actual existence of future events. But that the Divine fore-knowledge in this last sense, is antecedent to the Divine decrees and the foundation of them is palpably absurd. The absurdity of Dr. F's theory can be easily illustrated by examples.

God fore-knew that the world would exist: and therefore determined that it should exist. He fore-knew that Paul would be converted; and therefore determined that he should be converted. He fore-knew that Peter would be saved, and therefore determined that he should be saved. He fore-knew that the dead *would* rise, and therefore determined that they *should* rise. He fore-knew that there would be a day of judgment, and therefore determined that there should be. According to Dr. F. God's fore-knowledge of the existence of the world was antecedent to his will, or decree and the foundation of it. God fore-knew that the world would exist before He intended it should exist. He would therefore have fore-known the existence of the world, even if He had never willed its existence. Dr. F. it will be recollected, p. 4, has defined predestination to be "an efficient predetermination to bring about or accomplish any future event." But wherein consists the "efficiency of a determination to bring about or accomplish future events which it is previously fore-known will come to pass independently of those determinations?"

Will Dr. F. admit, that there are any future events, whatever, which depend upon the Divine will? If there are any such future events as depend on the Divine will, is it not a contradiction to say, that the Deity can fore-know those events before He knows his own *will* respecting them, and even before He *has* any will respecting them? If the existence of the world, for instance, depended on the will of God; how could He know that the world would come into existence, before He knew that it was his intention to bring it into existence; and even before any such intention existed in his own mind?

"But (the Dr. says) foreknowledge is pressed into this argument in another form. "The foreknowledge of God," it is said, "is tantamount to a decree, because, inasmuch as God cannot be in a mistake, whatever he foreknows must take place—his knowledge makes it certain." This is indeed shifting the argument; for if God's knowledge makes an event certain, of course it is not his predetermination. But according to this notion, every thing contained in the idea of predestination is implied in foreknowledge, which is only throwing the subject back, on the ground first glanced at, that knowledge and decree are both one, which is obviously absurd. Besides, such an idea would make the scriptures that represent God's foreknowledge as distinct from his decree and antecedent to it, worse than unmeaning. "Whom he did foreknow, them he did predestinate," would mean, "whom he did predestinate, them he did predestinate"—and, "elect according to the foreknowledge of God,"

would only mean, "that the decree of election, was *according* to the decree of election!" The absurdity of which is too apparent to need comment. And it may be urged further, in reply to this argument, that knowledge or foreknowledge cannot in the nature of things, have the least possible influence, in making an event certain. It is not at all difficult to conceive how the certainty of an event can beget knowledge; but if any one thinks that knowledge is the cause of certainty, let him show it—to me such a connection is inconceivable. Whatever God foreknows or foresees, will undoubtedly come to pass. But the simple question is, does the event take place because it is foreknown, or is it foreknown, because it will take place? Or in other words, does God know an event to be certain because it is certain, or does his knowing it to be certain make it certain? The question thus stated, at once suggests the true answer; for he would be considered a fool or a madman, who should seriously assert, that, a knowledge of a certainty produced that certainty. According to that, a certainty must exist, in order to be foreknown; and it must be foreknown, in order to exist! From all which it appears, that fore-knowledge can have no influence in making a future event certain."

But Dr. F. might have spared himself the trouble of refuting an error which no well informed Calvinists ever embraced. Calvinists do not mean that the Divine fore-knowledge *makes* future events certain, according to the literal import of that word. If they ever use the word "makes" in this connection, they use it in a figurative and restricted sense. All they mean is, that the Divine fore-knowledge *proves* future events certain. And this is really the case. It is impossible that God should fore-know that future events will come to pass unless it is infallibly *certain* that they will come to pass. This, Dr. F. himself admits. For he says,

"Whatever God foreknows or foresees, will undoubtedly come to pass. But the simple question is, does the event take place, because it is fore-known, or is it fore-known because it will take place? Or in other words, does God know an event to be certain because it is certain, or does his knowing it to be certain make it certain?"

Dr. F. justly observes,

"The question thus stated suggests the true answer; for he would be considered a fool, or a madman, who should seriously assert, that a knowledge of a certainty produced that certainty."

It is here *admitted* and *proved* by Dr. F. that Divine fore-knowledge demonstrates the certainty of future events, and that it depends upon that certainty. Dr. F. deserves the thanks of Calvinists not only for conceding this important point, but for placing it in a light so clear and convincing. I said, the Dr. *deserved* their thanks, because I am unwilling to suspect that the Dr. 'meant not so, neither did his heart think so.'

But if all things were fore-known, and therefore certain from eternity, as Dr. F. admits, the question very naturally arises, what made them certain? Did chance or contingency make them certain? Dr. F. has not yet proved, that there is any such thing as chance or contingency; and I venture to deny that there is any such thing in existence. If there were any such thing as chance or contingency it could not render things certain. For uncertainty enters into the very idea of it. It could not, therefore, be the ground of the Divine fore-knowledge: but on the other hand, it must render the very idea of fore-knowledge contradictory and absurd."

Were future events rendered certain from eternity by any other being besides God? Certainly not. No being can operate as a cause before its own existence. God is the only being in the universe who existed from eternity. And therefore no other being could have rendered it certain from eternity that any future events whatever would infallibly come to pass. Could the Divine perfections render future events certain, independently of the Divine will? No. The perfections of God cannot secure the existence of any future events whatever, either against his will or independently of his will. God brings nothing to pass from mere physical necessity. Whatever He does, He does of choice. Had God never willed the existence of the heavens and earth, the present system of events could not have gone into operation. It is plain, then, that this certainty of all future events from eternity, depended upon no cause out of the Divine Being; and that it could have depended upon no cause within the Divine Being, aside from the counsels of his will. If the certainty of all future events depended upon any cause whatever, then it depended upon the Divine will; and it thereby demonstrates the universal and eternal decrees of God. Will the Dr. say, then, that this certainty depends on nothing? It is in vain for him to say, that it now depends on secondary causes. For the question is, on what did this known certainty depend before there were any secondary causes in existence? Will Dr. F. say that before secondary causes existed, this previous certainty which was infallibly known to God, did not depend on any thing? If so, what is the difference between Dr. F's. theory on this subject, and Fatalism? Fatalism teaches, that all things were certain

from eternity, but that this certainty does not depend upon the Divine will, nor upon the Divine existence, nor upon any cause whatever. Dr. F. thinks, p. 14, that 'Fatalism is nearly allied to Calvinian predestination'! But if Dr. F. means to maintain, that this previous and eternal certainty of future events, did not depend on the Divine will, then his theory on this subject, is not merely "allied" to Fatalism, but is the very essence and quintessence of it. Dr. F. therefore, it is hoped, will pause, and seriously reflect. For "the doctrine of Fate," he has said himself, "is the element in which infidelity lives, and moves, and has its being."



NUMBER III.

So far as Dr. Fisk is concerned, I might perhaps dismiss that part of his discourse which relates to the Divine fore-knowledge. But for the sake of my Methodist brethren, I must take notice of three subterfuges with which they have been provided by a more *popular*, perhaps a more *learned*, but in my opinion a less *able* defender of their faith. I mean Dr. Adam Clarke. One of Dr. Clarke's subterfuges is, that future events are not all fore-known by God, in the same sense. He says, that some future events are certain, and others contingent; and he explains the Divine fore-knowledge according to this distinction. He thinks, that God fore-knows those future events which are *certain*, AS CERTAIN; and those future events which are *uncertain* or *contingent*, AS UNCERTAIN, OR CONTINGENT. Here Dr. Clarke has committed himself in two important particulars. In the first place, he has begged the main point in dispute: *That there are future events, which are absolutely UNCERTAIN OR CONTINGENT.* And in the second place, he abandons the ground which he professes to hold in common with his opponents: *That God CERTAINLY fore-knows whatever comes to pass.* I venture to deny, that there are any future events which are *absolutely* uncertain, or contingent, and challenge the proof. Dr. Clarke's disciples cannot prove it, without demonstrating, that it is neither true nor false, that some future events will take place. If they admit it to be *true*, that future events will take place, they thereby acknowledge, that the existence of those events is abso-

lutely certain. If they say that it is false, that those future events will take place, they thereby affirm, that those future events are not future; and that the non-existence of those future events is absolutely certain. If, therefore, they admit, that it is either true or false, that future events will take place, they must acknowledge that there is no absolute uncertainty or contingency respecting them. It consequently devolves on those, who have taken refuge in Dr. Clarke's theory of absolute contingency and uncertainty, to *affirm* and *prove* that it is neither true nor false, that some future events will take place. Whether the Methodists in general will venture upon the affirmation, or undertake the demonstration, till some new champion in the spirit and power of Dr. Clarke shall lead the way, it is not my province to determine.

But, as has been already observed, Dr. Clarke, in his theory of contingency, abandons the ground which he professes to hold in common with his opponents: *That God certainly fore-knows whatsoever comes to pass.* To say, that there are some events which are uncertain or contingent, in the view of God, and that He fore-knows them as such, is the same as to say that there are some events which in the eye of God are matters of uncertain conjecture; that, in respect to their taking place, they are absolutely unknowable, and fore-known only as impossible to be fore-known. In these contingent events, Dr. Clarke, and Arminians generally, include all the voluntary actions of creatures. According to the above theory, therefore, God does not certainly fore-know the future conduct of his creatures. Their future exercises and actions are altogether contingent and uncertain in his view. It is to the Divine mind, a matter of doubt and absolute uncertainty, how any of his creatures will act in time to come. It devolves on the advocates of this hazardous position, to show how God could certainly and infallibly foretell events, which, by reason of their contingency, He could not know would certainly and infallibly take place. It belongs to them to reconcile that ignorance of futurity which their theory ascribes to Omniscience, with the acknowledged perfections of Jehovah, and the infallible declarations, promises and predictions of his Holy Word.

But, Dr. Clarke, it seems, was not perfectly satisfied with this subterfuge, and therefore he invented another. He made the dis-

covery, that the Divine Omniscience is not the knowledge of all things, but the *power* of knowing them; and that the Divine fore-knowledge of all future events, is only a power to fore-know their existence, and therefore, does not imply that all future events are *actually fore-known*. He thinks that Omniscience no more implies that God knows all things which he has power to know, than Omnipotence implies that God does all things which he has power to do. But it may be said that God might have been, and that He once was Omnipotent, without doing *any* thing which He had power to do. He was Omnipotent from eternity, but all his works began in time. If the Omniscience of God as well as his Omnipotence be resolved into mere power, it would not only follow, that God might be Omniscient without knowing *every* thing, but that he might be Omniscient, without knowing *any* thing. But we have the same right to resolve all the perfections of the Deity into mere power, that we have to resolve his Omniscience into this attribute. It might be said, for instance, with as much appearance of truth, that the infinite goodness of God does not imply that He is actually good, nor his infinite wisdom, that He is actually wise; nor his Omnipresence, that He is actually in all places of the universe; but that these perfections merely imply, that God has power to be good, and wise, and every where present. Besides, this subterfuge of Dr. Clarke subverts his former subterfuge. For if God is Omniscient, and his Omniscience is a power to know all things, then all things are *knowable*; and there are no such events in existence, as are absolutely uncertain or contingent. It is absurd to suppose that God could have the *power* to fore-know all future events, if there were an absolute uncertainty or contingency in any of them. For the very idea of such uncertainty or contingency in future events, implies an impossibility of their being fore-known.

There is reason to apprehend that Dr. Clarke and Arminians generally, have not been perfectly satisfied with either of the two subterfuges which I have just examined. For, lest these should fail, they have contrived a third. They affirm, that strictly speaking, there is no such thing as fore-knowledge or after-knowledge with God: but that He is one eternal now. This subterfuge, however, shall be considered in my next number.

NUMBER IV.

The sentiment was maintained by Dr. Adam Clarke, and is still maintained by many others, that there is no such thing as duration with respect to the Divine Being. They contend there is no such thing, strictly speaking, as either fore-knowledge or after-knowledge with God: that He is one eternal now. The argument by which they attempt to support this position, is briefly as follows: that there is no succession of exercises in the mind of God; and, therefore, there can be no duration with respect to Him. But neither the principle assumed, nor the conclusion drawn from it, will bear examination. In this argument there are two things taken for granted, which are not true. In the first place, it is taken for granted, that duration necessarily implies succession. But this is not the case. Succession *does*, indeed, necessarily imply *duration*, but duration *does not* necessarily imply succession. Let us select, for example, an elementary particle of matter. It is easy to see, that the duration of this particle does not depend upon a succession of changes in it; nor does its duration imply any such succession. Though there is no succession of changes in it, yet it is still the subject of duration. The elementary particles composing the material universe, have undergone no material alteration since the creation of the world. It is true, they have been subject to a variety of motions and combinations. But these motions and alterations are by no means essential properties. They are merely incidental and arbitrary, depending entirely on the will of the deity. Had God pleased, He might easily have preserved all these elementary particles, both in a state of separation, and in a state of rest. And if He had done this, it is plain, that this circumstance could not have increased, nor diminished, nor annihilated their duration. It would still have been proper to ascribe to them time past, time present, and time future. Their duration is not incidental; it belongs to their very essence: and in respect to their essence, they are identically the same now, that they were when they were brought into existence. Duration is likewise applicable to the *essence* of the human soul, in which there is no change; but which always continues identically the same. Duration, then, does not necessarily imply succession. And therefore if it should be admitted, that there

is no succession in the mind of God, still it would not follow, that there is no such thing as duration in respect to Him.

But we are told that there can be no such thing as duration with respect to the divine Being, because He is eternal. This argument takes it for granted, that eternity precludes the idea of duration. But the truth is, duration enters into the very idea of eternity. The eternity of God implies, that He always *has* existed, and that he always *will* exist. The very meaning of eternity, is *duration without end*. Eternity is so far from implying, that there is no such thing as past duration, that it implies a past duration to which there was no beginning. And it is so far from implying that there is no such thing as future duration, that it implies a future duration which will never end. Eternal duration is perfectly intelligible. We can easily conceive of an eternity which is past, and of an eternity to come. But what is meant by an eternity in which there is *no* duration? An eternity which implies neither the *past* nor the *future*? An eternal *now*? To exclude the past and the future from eternity, is to make it consist in the present moment. An eternal *now* is an eternal moment. If eternity precludes both the past and the future, and includes only the present, then, though a being should begin and terminate his existence the same instant, he might still be called eternal. On this ground it will follow, that creatures are eternal every moment, and there are as many eternities as there are moments. I venture to say that an "*eternal now*," or an eternity in which there is no duration is a very short eternity.

It will be asked perhaps, if there is any propriety in saying, that God is older now, than he was, when he created the world. I answer, there is not. Nor does the eternity of God, as consisting, in *duration* without beginning and without end, imply any such absurdity. It necessarily implies the contrary. The terms old and young imply a beginning of existence; and therefore they are altogether inapplicable to a beginningless duration.

But I have not yet done with the argument which takes it for granted, that there is no succession of exercises in the mind of God, and thence infers, that there is no duration with respect to Him. It has been shown already, that the conclusion is not legitimately drawn from the principle assumed, even admitting it to be true. I am now prepared to examine the principle itself, which

asserts that there is no succession of exercises in the divine mind.

If there be no succession of volitions in the divine mind ; then that volition which created the world, always *was* exerted, is *now* exerted, and always *will* be exerted. But it is impossible that an efficient volition of the divine Being should be exerted, without producing its effect. If that volition which created the world always *was* exerted, then the world was always created. If God is *now* exerting that volition, and always *will* be exerting it, then he is *now* creating the world, and always *will* be creating it.

If there be no succession of volitions in the mind of God ; then that divine volition which will destroy the world, always *has been* exerted, is *now* exerted, and always *will be* exerted. And hence it follows, that this divine volition always *has* destroyed the world, is *now* destroying it, and always *will be* destroying it.

Again : If there be no succession of exercises in the divine mind ; then that volition which created the world, and that which will destroy it, are one and the same, from eternity to eternity ; and therefore, the world always *was* created and destroyed, is *now* created and destroyed, and always *will be* created and destroyed at one and the same time.

If there be no succession of exercises in the divine mind, then God has the same feelings towards the fallen angels *now*, that he had before they fell from their first estate ; and the same feelings towards sinners, *after* they become saints, that he had before their conversion.

Perhaps some opponent will say, however, that those divine volitions which produce external effects, are *successive*, but the divine determinations are eternal. But it may be replied, that this is giving up the point in dispute. If there be any succession of exercises in the divine mind, then there must be such a thing as duration with respect to God. For although *duration* does *not* necessarily imply *succession*, yet *succession* does necessarily imply *duration*.

It is said that a succession, or series of exercises in the divine mind, implies a beginning to them ; or a period when the divine being was entirely destitute of them. But I answer, we can as easily conceive of eternal motion, as of eternal rest : of eternal mental exertion, as of eternal mental inactivity. And to my mind eternal mental exertion is much more conceivable, than eternal mental in-

activity. In creatures a series of exercises has commenced which will never terminate. But there is no more absurdity in a series which had no beginning, than in a series which will never end.

It may be said, that if the divine exercises are successive, then every one of the divine exercises has had a beginning; and what is true of every exercise in this series *individually* considered, must be true of the *whole series collectively* considered. And therefore since every exercise in this series must have had a beginning; the whole series must have had a beginning; and, consequently, a succession of exercises in the divine mind, implies, that a period once was, when the divine being was entirely devoid of exercises.

Answer. This objection, though plausible, is sophistical. If it proves any thing, it will prove too much. If it proves, that there cannot be a series which has no beginning, it will prove in the same way, that there cannot be a series which will never end. The reasoning is just as applicable in the one case, as in the other. The objector might attempt to show in the same way, that the series of exercises which has begun in the *human soul* cannot continue forever, but must necessarily have an end. He might reason thus:—*‘Every exercise in the series of human exercises must have an end. But what is true of every exercise in this series, individually considered, must be true also of the whole series collectively considered: and therefore the whole series must have an end. Consequently the period must come, when the human soul will be entirely devoid of exercises.’* This reasoning seems plausible; but who does not see that it *must be* sophistical and unsound?

The objector, likewise, might argue in the same way, that there are bounds to space. He might reason thus: *‘Every portion of space is bounded. But what is true of every portion separately and individually considered, must be true of all those portions collectively considered. And, therefore, all space is bounded; or there are certain bounds, beyond which, there is no space whatever.’* This reasoning is similar to the objector’s reasoning with respect to the exercises of the Divine mind, and is just as plausible. But who does not see, that it *must be* a sophism, whether he can *answer* it or not? The fallacy of the above reasoning, consists in the misapplication and abuse of terms. The term *whole* is not applicable to *infinity*, but only to what is *finite*. In using the phrase *whole series*, the ob-

jector virtually makes the series he is speaking of, a *finite* series, before he *infers* that it is so. He virtually takes for granted the very thing to be proved. Besides, there is another fallacy in the argument, which consists in using the same word in different senses. Thus when it is said, with respect to a series of exercises in the Divine mind, that every exercise in this series must have a beginning, the term *beginning* is not to be understood *numerically*. It has no relation to number or succession, whatever. But when it is inferred that the *series* has a beginning, this same term is used in a very different sense. It relates to number and succession. It means that there is an exercise in the series which is the *first* of all. It is true, that every exercise in the series, begins to *exist*. But this does not imply that every exercise in the series begins the series; nor that there is *one* exercise in the series which begins it. The fact, therefore, that every exercise in this series has a beginning in itself, *WITHOUT* any relation either to *number* or *succession*, does not certainly imply that the series has a beginning *WITH* relation to *number* and *succession*. Although every exercise begins to exist; still the exercises in the series may be *innumerable*: the series, *numerically* speaking, may be *without beginning*, and *without end*.

Again: It is said, that whatever begins to exist, must be an effect and have a cause. Unless this be admitted, it is thought it will be impossible to prove, that any thing whatever is an effect; and consequently, that even the existence of God cannot be proved from the things which are made. Hence it is inferred, that, if the Divine exercises are successive, they must be effects and have an antecedent cause. But a beginningless series of effects resulting from a *previous* cause, is a plain absurdity.

Answer. It is freely admitted, that a beginningless series of effects, resulting from a previous cause, is plainly absurd. It is also admitted, that whatever begins to exist *out of* a self-existent being must be an effect, and have a cause. But it is not admitted, that whatever begins to exist, *within* a self-existent being, must be an effect, and have a cause. No being in the universe, besides God, is self-existent. The imperfection of all other beings is decisive evidence, that they are not self-existent, but dependent. And since they do not *exist* by the necessity of their nature, they cannot *move*

and *act* by any such necessity. Their *existence*, and consequently all their *motions* and *actions* are effects, and must have a cause adequate to their production. But it is not so with the Divine Being. There is no imperfection in him, and, therefore, nothing incompatible with self-existence. He is absolutely perfect; and an absolutely perfect being must be independent in his existence; he must exist by the necessity of his own nature. There is something in the nature of the divine Being, which renders his existence necessary; and that necessity which lies at the foundation of his *existence*, must lie equally at the foundation of his affections and exercises. A succession of exercises in the Divine Being, therefore, does by no means imply the absurdity, that He causes them himself; but only that He chooses and acts by *necessity*, just as He exists. Nor does a necessity of exercises in God, imply any such necessity of exercises in his creatures. *They* have not the properties of necessary existence. And as they do not even *exist* by the necessity of their nature, it is impossible, that they should *move* and *act* by any such necessity.

Again: It is objected that a succession of exercises in the Divine mind, implies that God is mutable.

Answer. There is a plain distinction between such a mutability as implies imperfection, and such a mutability as *does not* imply any imperfection. Now a succession of exercises in the mind of God, does not imply that he is mutable in his *existence*; nor that he is mutable in his *attributes*; nor that he is mutable in his *purposes*. And therefore it does not imply any such mutability as involves the least degree of imperfection. It implies nothing inconsistent with that kind of immutability which the Scriptures ascribe to God as a perfection of his nature. In short, it implies nothing inconsistent with the most just and scriptural views of an infinitely perfect Being.

The representations of Scripture concerning God clearly imply, that there is a succession of exercises in the Divine mind. According to Scripture, God looked with complacency upon all his works, before sin entered into the world, and pronounced them very good. But after the fall, man lost the *complacency* of his maker, and became the object of his *disgust*. "It [then] repented the Lord that he had made man, and it grieved him at his heart." Although this

Scripture expression does not denote any change of character, or purpose in the Divine Being, yet it does denote such a change of feeling in the mind of God, towards man, as his change from a holy to a sinful character required. God never regretted *all things* considered, that he had made man; yet, after all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth, it was to God *in itself considered* a just matter of regret, and sorrow and grief, that he had given man existence. I here make the distinction between what is *undesirable* in ITSELF, and *desirable* on the WHOLE, because, without this distinction, it is impossible to give a correct, or even a plausible interpretation of the passage which has been quoted. To God is ascribed grief in other places of Scripture. "How shall I give thee up Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? My heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together." According to Scripture, God exercises very different feelings towards sinners before their conversion from what he exercises towards them after their conversion. "God is angry with the wicked every day." But after sinners become converted unto God, they are no longer the objects of his unmingled abhorrence, but the objects of his complacency and delight. As soon as they learn the fear of the Lord, "the Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him." Such various affections in the mind of God, corresponding to the natures, relations, and changes of things, imply that his heart is not one, indivisible and eternal exercise; but that he has a *variety* and *succession* of holy exercises.

The Scripture speaks of God in the past, present, and future tenses. It teaches us, for instance, that God *did* create the world in the *beginning*; that he is *now* upholding and governing the world; and that he *will* judge the world at the *last day*. Nor is there any good reason to believe that such Scripture representations are mere accommodations to the understanding and language of men, and not to be understood according to their literal and obvious import. For Scripture and reason unite to prove, that past, present, and future duration is no less applicable to the divine Being, than to his creatures. But enough has been said to expose the absurdity of the supposition, that "God is one eternal now"; and that there is no such thing as *fore-knowledge* in respect to him. Doubtless the

Scriptures are perfectly and literally correct in ascribing "fore-knowledge to god," Dr. Adam Clarke and his followers to the contrary, notwithstanding.

I hope my Methodist brethren will excuse my apparent digression in this and the preceding number, when I assure them, that it was intended for their *benefit*. I expected they would think it necessary to call in Dr. Clarke to help Dr. Fisk maintain his ground. And I thought it was incumbent on me, to save them and Dr. Clarke that needless trouble.

I intend in my next number, to pay the most strict attention to Dr. Fisk.



NUMBER V.

I have already considered Dr. Fisk's professed refutation of the Calvinistic argument, founded on the divine fore-knowledge, and also *three* subterfuges of Dr. Adam Clarke. One of these subterfuges is, *That the Divine fore-knowledge consists partly in conjecture*. Another is, *That the Divine fore-knowledge consists merely in the power of fore-knowing*. And the third is, *That there is no such thing as Divine fore-knowledge; or, That "God is one eternal now."* The last of these subterfuges I suspect Dr. Fisk had in view, as a last resort, in the sentence which closes his remarks upon the second Calvinistic argument which he considers. The sentence is as follows: [p. 8.] "As he is in every point of wide immensity, so he is in every moment of long eternity." To say that "God is in every moment of long eternity," confounds the distinction between past, present and future duration, and implies, that "God is one eternal now." But this subterfuge was fully exposed in my last number. The Divine *fore-knowledge*, therefore, must not be treated in this discussion as a *nonentity*, but as a solid *reality*. Dr. Fisk denies, that the Divine fore-knowledge is founded upon the Divine decrees. On the contrary, he contends, that the decrees of God are founded upon his fore-knowledge. The Doctor himself allows, that there are some future events which God has decreed. And this is the same as to admit, that there are some future events which never would take place, if God had not decreed them.

And yet, according to Dr. Fisk, God's fore-knowledge even of those events which depend upon his decrees, does not prove those decrees. He contends that God fore-knew those events before he decreed them. That is, He fore-knew those events which could not take place without his decrees, before those decrees were formed. He fore-knew they *would* take place, before he knew the reason WHY they would take place; and even before there *was* any such reason. To say that his fore-knowledge of those events does *not prove* them to have been *decreed*, implies that He *might* have fore-known them, if they never *had* been decreed; although they could not take place *without* being decreed. Such is the palpable absurdity of Dr. Fisk's mode of reasoning on this subject.

Perhaps, however, the Doctor for the sake of avoiding this absurdity, would be willing to admit, that God's fore-knowledge of those *events* which depend upon his decrees, does *itself* depend upon them; and that he cannot fore-know what events will *fulfil* his decrees, without first knowing that there are such decrees to be fulfilled. But this admission would spoil all his reasoning upon the subject. After making this admission, he could not even pretend, that *fore-knowledge founded upon decrees* "makes an essential attribute of Deity depend upon the exercise of his attributes." Or that it implies that "the decrees of God must be passed and his plan contrived independently of his knowledge."

Besides: Nothing but the divine decrees could make any future events *certain* from eternity. Consequently, that certainty which is the object of the divine fore-knowledge, *necessarily* implies the divine decrees as its foundation. And, therefore, if the fore-knowledge of God proves that he has decreed *some* events, it equally proves that he has decreed *all* events. But Dr. Fisk cannot, on his own ground, prove from the divine fore-knowledge, that God has decreed any thing whatever. Nor can he consistently maintain, that God has decreed any events in the universe. For it is plainly absurd to talk of God's decreeing, that events should take place, when he previously fore-knew they *would* take place, independently of that decree.

After the Doctor had completely subverted the divine decrees by his representation of the divine fore-knowledge, it was not strange

that he should undertake to expunge the divine decrees from the divine plan. He proceeds, [p. 7.]

2. But predestination is argued, from the necessity of a divine plan.—“It cannot be conceived,” it is said, “that God would leave things at random and have no plan. But no alteration of his plan can take place, upon condition that his creatures act in this or that way.” But this argument is easily answered, at least for the present. For it assumes what ought to be proved, and what has not, to my knowledge, ever been proved, viz: that, to deny Calvinian predestination, is to deny, that God has a perfect plan. We acknowledge and maintain that God has a plan, one part of which is, to govern his responsible subjects without controlling their will, by a fixed decree—to punish the incorrigible, and save those who repent and believe. Does such a plan imply the necessity of a change, “on condition that his creatures act in this or that way?” If indeed it was necessary for God to decree an event, in order to fore-know it, this inference might be just. But as this is seen to be false, it follows that a perfect God, whose eye surveys immensity and eternity at a glance, and who necessarily knows all possibilities and contingencies, all that is, or will be, can perfectly arrange his plan, and preclude the possibility of a disappointment, although he does not, by a decree of predestination, fix all the volitions and acts of his subjects. Even in human governments, where the rulers can have no knowledge of the individuals who will transgress, or of the nature and extent of the transgressions, the principles and plan of government undergo no change, to accommodate themselves to the contingent acts of the subjects. How absurd then to suppose, that the All wise Ruler of the Universe will be subject to disappointment, unless he predestinate the transgressions of sinners, and the obedience of his saints! The truth is, in my view, this idea detracts from the wisdom of God; for the perfection of his plan, as they maintain it, is predicated on the imperfection of his attributes. But our view of the divine plan accords well with our idea of his infinite nature.

Here Doctor F. first undertakes to state the argument, and then attempts to refute it. The statement which he gives of the argument is contained in the following words: “*It cannot be conceived that God would leave things at random, and have no plan. But no alteration of his plan can take place upon condition, that his creatures act in this or that way.*”

But the Doctor has neither refuted this argument, nor fairly stated it. In the first place, he has not refuted the argument even as he has stated it himself. What he calls “the argument” consists of two plain propositions, without any inference whatever. The first is, ‘That God would not leave things at random, and have no plan.’ Now this proposition, it is admitted, is stated by Dr. Fisk without proof. It is too plain to require proof. Dr. Fisk himself does not deny it. The second proposition contained in what Dr. Fisk calls “the argument” is, ‘That no alteration of his plan can

take place upon condition, that his creatures act in this or that way.' This proposition likewise is assumed, according to the Doctor's statement. And it is so plain a truth, that Doctor F. does not presume to call it in question. Now these two plain truths are the only propositions assumed in the argument so far as the Doctor states it. If any thing *else* is "assumed," it is assumed in the *inference* which the Doctor feels himself obliged to draw from the two plain truths which he states as the substance of the argument. As Doctor F. has not told what inference he did draw from those two truths, I can only conjecture what that inference was. But I conclude it must have been this, That God has fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass. Whether this was the precise inference which the Doctor drew from those truths or not; he seems to think it incumbent on him to disprove it. He says, ["it assumes what ought to be proved, and what has not, to my knowledge, ever been proved, viz: that to deny Calvinian predestination is to deny that God has a perfect plan. We acknowledge and maintain, that God has a plan, one part of which is, to govern his responsible subjects, without controlling their will, by a fixed decree—to punish the incorrigible, and save those who repent and believe. Does such a plan imply the necessity of a change, "on condition that his creatures act in this or that way"?] The Dr. makes the following reply. "If indeed it was necessary for God to decree an event in order to fore-know it, this inference might be just." But this is seen to be strictly true, the Doctor's assertion to the contrary notwithstanding.—For no event could be fore-known from eternity, unless it was always certain. Nothing out of the divine Being existed from eternity to make it certain. And there was nothing within the divine Being which could make it certain, but the divine decree. It does not appear, therefore, that the above inference is unjust. And Doctor F. has not yet refuted the argument which he pretends to state.

But, in the second place, the argument is not fairly stated. The Doctor seems to think, that the perfection of the divine plan consists solely in its *immutability*. But a *perfect* plan implies something more. 1st. It must propose the best possible end. 2dly. It must include the best possible means. 3dly. It must preclude from the system every thing which is useless and detrimental. 4thly. It

must be immutable. Now infinite Goodness must seek the best end. Infinite wisdom must select the very best means for its accomplishment, and preclude every event from the system which is either detrimental or unnecessary. And infinite Power cannot fail to execute the plan which infinite Wisdom has devised, and infinite Goodness seeks to accomplish. The conclusion is irresistible: That God means to secure the greatest good; and that the plan he has adopted, and which he is carrying into execution includes all those events which are necessary to the greatest good and precludes all other events. The Doctor's assertion, therefore, that 'the perfection of God's plan, as Calvinists maintain it, is predicated on the imperfection of his attributes,' is altogether gratuitous and unfounded.

If Doctor F. could prove that God's plan might be *unchangeable* without fixing the character and conduct of his creatures, he could not *thus* prove the absolute *perfection* of such a plan. The Doctor himself says, that "Even in human governments, where the rulers can have no knowledge of the individuals who will transgress, or of the nature and extent of the transgressions, the principles and plan of government undergo no change, to accommodate themselves to the contingent acts of the subjects." Now surely Dr. F. will not pretend, that any human government is perfect, notwithstanding the immutability which he ventures to ascribe to them. In the divine plan, therefore, *immutability alone* is not sufficient to constitute it perfect. The Doctor admits that the divine plan might not be unchangeable, on his principles, "if it was necessary for God to decree an event, in order to fore-know it." We have seen that this was necessary. And therefore the point which Doctor F. labored so hard to establish, he has not proved. But if he had proved it, it would not have affected the argument, founded on the necessity of an absolutely *perfect* plan of divine operation.

The argument founded on "the necessity of a divine plan" may be presented in another light. The essential knowledge and wisdom of God, must place before him all possible events. His infinite goodness cannot possibly be indifferent to any of those events. He must have some choice respecting them all. Respecting every possible event he must choose, either that it shall exist, or that it shall not. Those events which he chooses should exist, that choice must

secure. And all those which he chooses should not exist, that very choice must prevent. Consequently, all those events which do exist, were chosen from eternity.

The Doctor says, it is God's plan "to punish the incorrigible, and save those who repent and believe." Now suppose a sinner should repent and believe to-day. According to Doctor F. it is God's present intention to save him. But I suppose the Doctor in common with the rest of my Methodist brethren, believes that such a man may yet fall from grace, and die an incorrigible sinner; and that such instances have actually occurred. If it is the divine intention to save every one who repents and believes, could such instances of falling from grace occur, without changing the divine intentions towards those particular persons?

As Doctor F. professes to believe in the divine fore-knowledge, I should like to put a few more questions to him on this subject, if he would not consider it uncivil. Does the Doctor believe that God fore-knew that the fallen angels would sin and be forever miserable, before he brought them into existence? Did God fore-know that their existence would prove an everlasting curse to themselves and to millions of the human race? And did he in full view of these awful consequences, choose to give existence to those spirits? Has he fore-known from eternity, that it would have been good for Judas, and all those who die in their sins, if they had never been born? Does he fore-know all this, and still choose to bring such individuals into existence? Can the Dr. love such a God as this? If so, Why can he not love a God who has ordained whatsoever comes to pass.



NUMBER VI.

I have already attempted to show, that the Calvinistic arguments founded on the divine fore-knowledge, and the perfection of the divine plan, are well founded; the attempt of Dr. Fisk and others to refute these arguments, notwithstanding. I shall now inquire, whether Dr. F. has proved the doctrine of predestination to be unscriptural.

"The Scriptures abound with passages which at once prove the doctrine."

Dr. Fisk says :

"If this is true, then, indeed we must submit"!!

It is devoutly to be wished, that the Doctor may not find it necessary to "*submit*" to the truth, 'but rejoice in it as one that findeth great spoil.'

"But [says the Dr.] the question is, Where are these passages? After such a strong assertion, it would probably appear surprising, to one unacquainted with this subject, to learn, that there is not a single passage which teaches directly, that God hath fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass. Yet this is the fact. If the doctrine is taught in scripture, it is in an indirect manner."

Here I would observe,

1. Dr. Fisk affirms, "that there is not a single passage which teaches directly, that God hath fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass." I affirm that there is. The Dr.'s assertion is without proof. Mine, therefore, is as good as his.

2. If Doctor F. means, that there is not a single passage which APPEARS to teach this doctrine directly; then he might have spared himself the trouble of explaining away, p. 9, the following passage :

"Who worketh all things after the council of his own will."

It were absurd for the Doctor to attempt to explain away a meaning which the passage did not even *appear* to have.

3. If the Doctor's assertion were true, it would not justify the inference which the Doctor draws from it. He asserts, "that there is not a single passage which teaches directly, that God hath fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass." He infers,

"If this doctrine is taught in Scripture it is in an indirect manner."

This inference is not contained in the premises. The truth is, a doctrine may *not* be taught directly in a *single* passage *separately considered*; and yet be taught directly in *several* passages *collectively considered*. For example, the Unitarian says, that there is not a single passage which teaches the doctrine of a Trinity in the God-head. His assertion is not true. But if it were true, it would not prove, that this doctrine is not directly taught in the Word of God. One passage directly teaches that the Father is God; another, that the Son is God; a third, that the Holy Ghost is God; and a fourth,

that "the Lord our God is one Lord." Although a Trinity in Unity is *not* directly taught in any *one* of these passages, taken *separately*; yet it *is* directly taught in *all* those passages taken *together*.—Just so, with respect to the doctrine of predestination. If it were not taught in any one passage, taken *singly* and *separately*, that God *fore-ordains whatsoever comes to pass*; still it would by no means follow, that this doctrine is not directly and plainly taught in the Bible.

"Nor will it follow [says Dr. Fisk] because God hath predestinated some things; that he hath, therefore, decreed all things."

I answer, the correctness of the inference, *that God has decreed ALL things*, from the fact, *that he has decreed SOME things*; depends on the *nature* and *connection* of those things which he has decreed. Thus: If God has decreed the *least* things, such as the falling of a sparrow, and the number of our hairs, it is reasonable to believe, that he has decreed things which are *greater*. If he has decreed things which are of the *least* importance, he has doubtless decreed things which are of *more* importance. If he has decreed those things which pertain to the *body*; He has doubtless decreed those which pertain to the *soul*. If it was necessary, that he should fore-ordain the events of the *natural* world; it was much more necessary, that he should fore-ordain the events of the *moral* world. If it was important, that God should determine the *temporal* destinies of men; how much more important, that he should determine their *eternal* destinies.

Besides: The events which take place under the divine government are connected with each other, as occasions and consequences, second causes and effects. If God, therefore, has fore-ordained *some* of these events, there is reason to believe that he has fore-ordained them *all*. It is impossible to conceive how God could determine *one* link, in a chain of events, without determining all those *other* links on which that *one* depended.

"All those passages, then, [says the Doctor,] which have been so frequently quoted as proof of this doctrine, which only go to prove, that God hath predetermined certain events, are not proof in point."

The Dr. seems to take it for granted, that no passage of Scripture *proves* more than it *asserts*.

This is not true. Every passage proves more than it asserts. If a passage *asserts* the dependence of *one* man; it *proves* the depend-

ence of *all* men. If a passage asserts, that *one* moral act is decreed, it proves, that predestination is consistent with moral action, or moral agency. If a passage *asserts*, that God has a supreme regard for his own glory ; it *proves* that he will *secure* the existence of every thing which *will* promote his glory, and *prevent* the existence of every thing which will not promote it. If a passage *asserts* that God is not indifferent to *some* events ; it *proves*, that he is not indifferent to *any* events but that he positively chooses either that they *shall* come into existence, or that they shall *not*.

To ascend from particular instances to general conclusions, is called the method of induction. This mode of investigating truth, has been used with great success in the sciences ; and I see no reason why it is not as safe in *morals* as in *physics*. But Dr. Fisk strikes at the very foundation of this mode of investigation. Suppose the Dr. should undertake to prove now, THAT ALL MEN ARE MORTAL ; and should proceed on the ground that he assumes, That no passage proves any thing more than it asserts. On this ground he could not possibly prove, that all men are mortal, unless he could find a passage which asserts this truth in direct terms. Should the Doctor prove, that men always have been subject to mortality, it might be replied, on his ground, that this only proves that *some* men are mortal ; and, therefore, 'is not proof in point.' Should he show, that men are continually dying in this world ; he might still be told, on his own principles, that, in this way, he makes no advance. His arguments go only to prove, that individuals are mortal, *so far* as he has opportunity to *know* ; 'they are not, therefore, proof in point.' Should the Doctor quote *passages* of Scripture, which do not expressly assert, that all mankind are mortal ; he might be told, that, these passages, [on his ground,] are not proof in point.' Should the Doctor undertake to establish some general conclusion, and an opponent should treat his arguments in this style, I think it not unlikely, that the Doctor would complain of such treatment as disingenuous and unfair. I do not wish, however, to impeach either the Dr.'s motives or understanding. And, therefore, I will leave him and the public, to make the application.

In respect to predestination, however, every passage is in point, which *proves* what the opponents of this doctrine *deny*, or *disproves* what they *affirm*. Arminians deny that the decrees of God are con-

sistent with moral agency. Those passages, therefore, which teach that God hardened Pharaoh's heart, and then plagued and destroyed him for his obstinacy, are "proof in point." Arminians deny, that God has decreed the obedience of saints. All those passages, therefore, which teach, that 'God has chosen them that they should be holy,' and 'predestinated them, that they should be conformed to the image of his Son'; that 'he puts his Spirit within them, and causes them to walk in his statutes, and to keep his judgments and do them,' are "proof in point." Arminians deny that God has decreed what persons shall repent and turn to Him. All those passages, therefore, which teach, that the new birth, love, repentance and faith are the fruit of the spirit, the gift and the work of God, "who worketh all thing after the counsel of his own will," are "proof in point." Arminians contend, that as many as believe are in consequence of their faith, ordained to eternal life. All those passages, therefore, which reverse this order, and teach, that 'as many as were ordained to eternal life and believed,' are "proof in point." Arminians contend, that men have a self determining, independent power of acting. All those passages, therefore, which teach, that "it is not in him that walketh to direct his steps"; that "we are not sufficient of ourselves, to think any thing as of ourselves;" and that it is in 'God we live and move and have our being,' are "proof in point." Arminians deny, that God has decreed sin. Those passages, therefore, which teach, 'that God made Sihon's spirit obstinate, moved David to number Israel, put a lying spirit in the mouth of Ahab's prophets, and put into the hearts of the kings of the earth to agree and give their kingdom unto the beast,' are "proof in point." Arminians, [p. 7.]

"maintain that God has a plan, one part of which is to govern his responsible subjects without controlling their will ;"

that is to say, God governs mankind only by giving them up to the government of their own *ungovernable* will; and rewarding and punishing them according to their *ungovernable* conduct. Those passages, therefore, which teach, that 'the preparations of the *heart* in man, as well as the answer of the tongue, are from the Lord; that even the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water, He turneth it whithersoever He will; that creatures are in the hand of God as clay is in the hands of the potter; and that of

Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things,' are "proof in point."

Dr. F. says, p. 8:

"We know of many [passages] which say of certain events which have come to pass, that God did not *command* them nor *will* them":

and, therefore, he thinks that the abundant Scripture proof is all on the Arminian side of the question. But cannot Dr. F. see any distinction between the commands of God and his decrees? nor between what He chooses in itself considered, and what He chooses on the whole? Can Dr. F. perceive no difference between God's *commanding* Pharaoh to let Israel go, and his *decreeing* that Pharaoh should *not* let them go?—Can He perceive no difference between God's unwillingness in *itself*, that Christ should die, and his choosing on the *whole*, to put him to grief, and make his soul an offering for sin? These distinctions are too plain to be denied. And therefore those passages which teach, that God has not *commanded* some things, do not prove that He has not *decreed* them. And those passages which teach, that God is unwilling, that some events should take place, which actually come to pass, will not answer the Dr.'s purpose. They must mean, either, that God is unwilling in *itself* considered, that these events should take place, or else that He is unwilling on the whole. If they mean only an unwillingness in *itself considered*, they will not answer the Dr.'s purpose; because, in *this sense*, they are perfectly consistent with the doctrine, *that God has fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass*. If they be understood to mean an unwillingness *all things* considered, they will not answer the Dr.'s purpose, even in *this case*. For, an unwillingness, *all things* considered, that events should take place, amounts to a *decree*, that they shall *not* take place. If the passages which the Dr. speaks of, be understood in this *last* sense, therefore, they would prove *too much*. They would prove that some events take place in spite of the determinations of Omnipotence.

NUMBER VII.

Dr. Fisk says, [p. 8.]

"It is argued however, that certain acts of moral agents, even those acts for which they are held responsible, are, according to the Scriptures, the results of God's predetermination, and therefore, it is reasonable to infer, that all are. This general conclusion however, is not contained in the premises."

It is indeed a very summary way of disposing of an argument, to *assert*, without proving, that the conclusion is not contained in the premises. The Dr. virtually takes it for granted, that a general conclusion cannot be legitimately drawn from particular instances. But is it so? If it were proved, that God has created *one* man; might it not be safely inferred, that God has created *all* men? If it were proved, that *one* man is constantly and entirely *dependent*; might it not be inferred, that *all* men are? The Dr. will probably say *yes*; and assign the following reason: *that all men are ALIKE in the essential properties of their existence.* Very well. The moral acts of creatures are all alike in respect to those properties which are essential to the existence of moral exercises. Does not the fact, then, that *some* moral exercises of saints and sinners are created, prove that *all* are? Does not the fact, that some of their moral exercises arise without a self-determining power of acting, prove that all do? Does not the fact, that some of their moral exercises are dependent for their existence, on the Divine will, prove that all are thus dependent? To say that God has decreed, in certain instances, what exercises shall be originated by a self-determining power is a palpable absurdity. It amounts to saying, that in some instances, God determines a power, which can be determined only by itself. It is self-evident, that the power of acting in men, is necessary to every one of their actions. But the question is, Whether this power of acting is dependent, for its exertions, on the Divine will; or whether it is an independent, self-determining power. If the power of acting in men, is a *self-moving* apparatus, it must of course place all the actions of mankind beyond the reach of the Divine decrees. Consequently, if God has decreed some of their exercises, they have not in these instances a self-determining power of acting. The power of putting forth those acts which are *fore-ordained*, must cer-

tainly be dependent for its exertions, on the Divine will. And if the power of putting forth these acts, is dependent, then there is no reason to believe, that men have a self-determining power of acting. For it is plainly absurd to suppose, that a man has two powers of acting; one of which is *self-moved*, and the other *dependent*, in its exercises on the Divine will. Now the same arguments which *disprove*, that men have a self-determining power, *imply*, that they are dependent for all their exercises, on the Divine will; and of course, that all their exercises are *fore-ordained*.

Dr. F. admits that, [p. 8.]

“If it can be proved from Scripture, that God holds his creatures responsible for the results of his own decrees—such Scripture proofs would be strong arguments to ward off the objections that are brought against this system.”

Dr. F. therefore, thinks it necessary for him to examine and explain those Scriptures. And he begins with an examination of the following declaration of Joseph to his brethren: “As for you, ye thought evil against me, but God meant it for good.” On this passage the Dr. makes the following remarks.

“Now (p. p. 8, 9.) without stopping here to inquire whether Joseph was inspired to utter this sentiment, we are ready to acknowledge, that there are a number of similar scriptures, which teach, that in the results of the wicked acts of wicked men, God had a design and a controlling influence, and thereby made them subservient to his own purposes. He hath wisdom and power “to make the wrath of men praise him, and to restrain the remainder of wrath.” But does he, therefore, decree the wrath itself? And is this wrath necessary to the accomplishment of his purposes? As well might it be said, that because a government, in quelling a rebellion, replenished its exchequer from the confiscated estates of the rebels, therefore that government decreed the rebellion, and was dependent upon it, for the prosperity of the nation. Let it be distinctly understood then, that to overrule and control the *results* of an act, is altogether different from making the act itself the result of an overruling and controlling power.”

It seems then, the Dr. has concluded ‘not to stop here, to inquire whether Joseph was inspired to utter this sentiment.’ This language of the Dr. seems to imply that he considered it questionable whether Joseph was really inspired, but thought it unnecessary to the argument to *disprove* the inspiration of that holy man. I shall not stop here to inquire, whether Calvinists in general will be SUFFICIENTLY grateful to Dr. F. for his *condescension*; or whether they will be GUILTY of suspecting, that the Dr.’s condescension

consisted in his inability to prosecute that investigation to his own advantage. Should my Methodist brethren, however, wish me to pursue the inquiry, which I have said I will not stop *here* to make, I will endeavor to gratify their wishes, as soon as they shall make them known. But yet I *will* stop here to inquire briefly into the inspiration of Joseph. And I would observe 1st. That Joseph was at least, *sometimes* inspired. He was inspired to interpret the dreams of the chief butler, and the chief baker. He was inspired to interpret the dream of Pharaoh. Pharaoh was convinced of his inspiration, and told his servants, that they had found in Joseph, a man in whom was the Spirit of God. He was inspired to say unto his brethren, "God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence." Again, 2dly. He spoke the language of inspiration, when he told his brethren how long the famine should continue in the land: and it was in immediate connection with this prophetic declaration, that he first uttered the substance of the sentiment contained in the text of Scripture which the Dr. quotes. "And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now therefore, be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you to preserve life. For these two years, hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in the which there shall be neither earing nor harvest. And God sent me before you, to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither but God." These passages and the one quoted by Dr. Fisk, were recorded not to deceive, but to instruct succeeding generations. I see no more reason to doubt the inspiration of Joseph in uttering these sentiments, than to doubt the inspiration of the prophets, or of the apostles of our Lord, in uttering the sentiments which they publicly taught.

Dr. Fisk would fain make Joseph say to his brethren nothing more than this: *That God overruled the results of their wicked conduct without determining their conduct itself.* But if Joseph meant nothing more than this, why did he not say so? Why did he use language so foreign from his meaning? If God had no design nor agency in their selling him into Egypt, why did he say thus to them? "Be not grieved nor angry with yourselves that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you to preserve life.—And God

sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth.—So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God.” Here Joseph asserts three times that God had sent him into Egypt. And what is this but saying, *that God’s hand and counsel were concerned in his being sent thither by his brethren?*

But perhaps Dr. F. will say, that God decreed that Joseph should be sent into Egypt, but did not decree, that he should be sent thither by his *brethren*. This amounts to saying, *that God decreed the end without decreeing the means*; that is to say, *He DECREED the end, but left it to CHANCE to ACCOMPLISH the end.*

It is written, ‘The wrath of man shall praise thee; the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.’ On this passage the Dr. inquires:

“But does he therefore decree the wrath itself? And is this wrath necessary to the accomplishment of his purposes?”

I answer, if God restrains all the wrath that will not praise him; then He has all hearts in his hands. Consequently He was abundantly able to restrain and prevent all the sin and wrath which exist, if He had chosen to do this. If He prevents all the wrath which will not praise Him, without impairing the moral agency of his creatures; then He might if He had chosen, have prevented all the sin and wrath of his creatures, without destroying their moral agency. The sin and wrath of his creatures, therefore, do not take place in opposition to his choice all things considered.

The passage of Scripture last cited, proves 1st. That God is not indifferent to the wrath of his creatures; or that He has some choice respecting the existence or non-existence of this wrath in every instance. It proves, 2dly. That God is able to prevent their wrath without impairing their moral agency, and does prevent it, so far as He sees best. And therefore it proves, 3dly. That no wrath can exist either without his choice or against his choice; or, which is the same thing, that no more wrath can exist, than He chooses, all things considered, should exist. But Dr. F. thinks,

“It might as well be said, that because a government in quelling a rebellion, replenished its exchequer from the confiscated estates of the rebels, therefore that government decreed the rebellion, and was dependent upon it, for the prosperity of the nation.”

But I answer, The cases are not parallel in those points on which the reasoning depends. To make the Dr.’s example a suitable illustration of the government of God; he must suppose a government

which was able to prevent and does prevent every rebellion that will not redound to the good of the nation. Were this the case, it might be justly inferred, that no more rebellion existed in the government, than that government chose to suffer.

The next passage which Dr. F. undertakes to explain is the following: "The Lord hath made all things for himself; yea even the wicked for the day of evil." Here Dr. F. makes the following important concession:

"That the Lord hath made all things for his own glory is a proposition easily understood, and doubted, I trust by none; and this is evidently the meaning of the former member of the passage."

But to say, that the Lord hath made all things for his own glory, is the same as to say, that He *intended* all things for his own glory, when He made them. That is, all things have come into existence, agreeably to the Divine intentions, or purposes. Dr. F. therefore has virtually admitted, that the decrees of God extend to all the works of his hands. But perhaps Dr. F. means, that the decrees of God extend only to the *existence* of his creatures, and not to their motions and actions. If so, why does Dr. F. admit, that God has made all things for his own *glory*? The end for which all things are made, refers to the use which is to be made of them. If God has made all things for his own glory; then He intends, that all his creatures shall always subserve his glory, by all their motions and actions, characters, changes and conditions. And this implies, that the Divine decrees extend to whatsoever comes to pass. So much Dr. F. has *virtually* admitted is contained in the passage: "The Lord hath made all things for himself, yea even the wicked for the day of evil." Still Dr. F. says:

"The latter clause, if it helps the cause for which it is quoted at all, must mean, that the Lord has predestinated men to be wicked, that he might make them miserable. But it is not necessary to make the text speak this shocking sentiment."

I answer, Calvinists do not make it speak this shocking sentiment. If the misery of the wicked were the ultimate end of their creation, it would not be true, that God had made them for his own glory. The truth is, God has not made the wicked either for the sake of their wickedness or for the sake of their misery, as an ultimate end. He has predestinated the wicked unto sin and misery not for the sake of both sin and misery, nor for the sake of either;

but for his own glory. The construction of the passage, therefore, which Dr. F. says the Calvinistic cause requires, is not the construction which Calvinists adopt. This construction their cause does not require, but forbids. If such a construction is necessary at all, it is to aid Arminians in misrepresenting the Calvinistic sentiments. The most natural construction of the passage is, "That God has made all things for his own glory; and the wicked for the day of evil," to accomplish the same end.

"But there is another class of passages, (says Dr. F.) like the following: "He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth."—"He worketh all things after the counsel of his own will"—"I will do all my pleasure." But these passages establish nothing in opposition to our views, unless it should first be proved by other passages, or in some other way, that it is God's will and pleasure to work *all things* even wickedness in the wicked."

But I would ask, why is it necessary to resort to *other* passages in order to prove, that God *works all things*; when this is expressly asserted in one of the passages which Dr. F. quotes. "Who worketh ALL THINGS after the counsel of his own will."

Dr. F. says,

"That God blinds men and hardens their hearts judicially, as a just punishment for their abuse of their agency, and for this act of his in blinding and hardening them, He does not make them responsible."

But to say, that God hardens men judicially, as a punishment for sin, is to make the punishment of sin, consist in sin itself. No one pretends, that God holds his creatures responsible for his own acts. But when God hardens and blinds men, their hardness and blindness are not *his* act, but the *effects* of it. And for this hardness and blindness, He does hold them responsible. He hardened Pharaoh, that he should not let Israel go. And for this very hardness and obstinacy of Pharaoh, God inflicted on him ten plagues, and destroyed him in the red sea. Dr. F. proceeds: [p. 10.]

"And since there are wicked men and lying spirits, they become fit instruments in deceiving and tormenting each other; and therefore God gives them power and liberty to go abroad deceiving and being deceived."

The language here implies, I presume, more than he means. For if God gives lying spirits power and liberty to deceive, He doubtless chooses, all things considered, that they *should* deceive. It can hardly be supposed, that God *gives* them more power and liberty than He intends they shall exercise. But although Dr. F.'s lan-

guage is too strong for *him*, it is not so strong as Scripture, "Now, therefore, the Lord hath PUT a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets." Dr. F. says,

"As to the passage from Acts, none of us deny, but that Jesus Christ was delivered up to suffer and die by the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God; but it is most emphatically denied, that the taking and slaying of Jesus Christ by wicked hands, was the result of the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God. If any think otherwise let them prove it."

It seems then, that God decreed, that Christ should be betrayed; but not, that Judas should betray him. He decreed, that Christ should be delivered up to Pilate, but not that the Jews should deliver him up. He decreed, that Christ should be scourged; but not that Pilate should scourge him. He decreed that Christ should be crucified; but not that his enemies should crucify him. In short, God decreed, that Christ should be betrayed, delivered up, mocked, buffeted, spitted on, crowned with thorns, and *murdered*: but not by wicked hands; that is, it was decreed that He should be murdered; but the murder was not decreed. This is in substance the theory of Dr. Fisk. "If any think otherwise, let them prove it."



NUMBER VIII.

I am now ready to examine Dr. Fisk's objections against the doctrine of predestination.

Objection 1.

"This doctrine of predestination makes God the author of sin."

Answer. The force of this objection consists in its ambiguity. The word *author* is used in different senses. It sometimes means the *doer* or *perpetrator* of a thing. In this sense, the author of sin is the sinner himself: and the author of the *first* sin, was the *first sinner*. In this sense God was not the author even of those sins which Dr. Fisk will acknowledge, that He decreed: such as Pharaoh's refusing to let Israel go; Sihon's obstinacy in not the letting the children of Israel pass through his borders; David's numbering Israel and Judah; and the kings of the earth agreeing to give their kingdom unto the beast until the words of God should be fulfilled. Although God decreed, that these things should be done, He did not do them himself

The word *author* generally means the *approver* as well as *doer* of a thing. In this sense, God is not the author of sin, notwithstanding He has decreed its existence. He neither commits sin himself, nor approves it in others. Sin is always that abominable thing which his soul hateth.

But the word *author* is sometimes used to mean an *efficient cause*. Now I am willing to admit, that those Scriptures which teach that God has decreed the sinful conduct of men, do imply, that He is the efficient cause of moral evil. For his own glory and the greatest good, He said, *Let there be sin, and there was sin*. The above objection, when stript of all ambiguity, means only, that "God worketh all things (without a single exception) after the counsel of his own will." This I freely admit: but it remains for Dr. Fisk to show that it is inconsistent with the Divine character.

Objection 2.

"This doctrine of predestination destroys the free-agency and of course the accountability of man."

Answer. An agent is one that chooses. A free-agent is one that acts of choice in the view of motives. Free-agency is the same as voluntary action. We can conceive of no higher freedom in the universe, than freedom of choice. A free choice is one that is exempt from involuntary restraint and compulsion. In this sense every choice is free, and must be free in its very nature. It is impossible, in the very nature of things, that a choice should be brought into existence involuntarily. A choice cannot oppose its own existence. If God has decreed that men shall act of choice in the view of motives, He has decreed that they shall act freely. And when He causes men to act of choice in the view of motives, He causes them to act freely. The decrees and agency of God, therefore, are so far from destroying our free-agency, that they necessarily secure it.

Dr. F. says,—

"That it [predestination] destroys free-will, was seen and acknowledged by many predestinarians of the old school."

And he quotes several passages from Mr. Southey's life of Wesley to show that this was the case. But the truth is, Calvinists have always believed in the *free moral agency of man*, according to the true import of that phrase, although they have always opposed the

Arminian doctrine, that free-agency consists in contingency of choice, or a self-determining power. Arminians make *free*-will the same as a *self-determining* will. It is free-will only as defined by Arminians, which Calvinists have opposed. Dr. F. says:

"A moral agent, to be free, must be possessed of a self-determining principle."

Let us examine this self-determining principle.—What does it mean? Does it mean that every choice originates itself? Or, that every choice is originated by another choice? Or, that every choice is originated by a principle which is *distinct* from choice, antecedent to it, and the foundation of it? Or, that every choice arises by necessity? Or, that every choice arises by chance? Or does it mean neither of these things?

1. By a self-determining principle, does Dr. F. mean, that every choice originates itself? This implies, that every choice is both the cause and effect of itself; that it exists before it does exist; that it cannot exist till after it has existed; and that it produces itself, and is produced by itself at one and the same instant. Again,

2. Does Dr. F. mean, that every choice is produced by another choice previous to itself? This implies, that every choice is produced by an endless series of choices. A present choice, for instance, must have been produced by an antecedent choice; and this by another previous choice, and so on without end. But perhaps Dr. F. means,

3. That every choice is produced by an internal principle, distinct from choice, antecedent to it, and the foundation of it. If our acts of choice are produced in this way; then they are produced by an involuntary cause; and the existence of these choices is as unavoidable, as if they were produced by an EXTERNAL cause. This I suppose would hardly suit Dr. F.'s idea of *freedom*, by which he seems to mean nothing more nor less than contingency, or absolute uncertainty. If our acts of choice are produced by such a cause as this, then that cause must operate in order to produce its effects. And that operation must have a cause too; and that another; and so on, either in an endless series, or back to the first cause of all things. I presume, however, that Dr. F. will not admit, that the causes of our choices are connected with the first cause of all things. For this would lead to the doctrine of predestination. And if He

does not admit any such connection; then, to be consistent with himself, he must hold either, that these involuntary causing acts come into existence by chance, or else that they are produced by an endless series of involuntary causes. Should Dr. F. reject these absurdities; then I ask,

4. Does Dr F. when he speaks of a self-determining principle, mean that our acts of choice arise from the necessity of our natures. This supposition would hardly suit Dr. F.'s idea of freedom. For he thinks that the responsible acts of creatures must be "*unnecessitated.*"

Besides: It is absurd to suppose, that creatures act by the necessity of their natures, when they do not even *exist* by any such necessity. But,

5. Does Dr. F. mean, when he speaks of a self-determining principle, that our acts of choice come into existence by chance? Nothing *but* chance can meet Dr. F.'s idea of freedom, as consisting in uncertainty or contingency. For, if our choices are produced by a cause, whether external or internal, there can be no contingency in the choices produced. If our choices are effects, their cause, whether external or internal, must be entirely distinct *from* its effects, antecedent *to* them, independent *of* them; and completely beyond their control. And if our choices arise from the necessity of our nature, that necessity must, likewise, be completely beyond our control. But if our choices arise neither by causation, nor by necessity; then they must arise by chance. If chance, therefore, will not meet Dr. F.'s idea of freedom, *nothing* will. But I confess, I have some doubt whether CHANCE itself could make Dr. F. as free as he wishes to be. To please him, his volitions must be free from *every foreign* influence. They must be in all respects their own masters. They must be free from causation, and free from necessity, and free from every spring of action, which is not under their own control. But if our choices arise from chance, they arise from a source over which they have no control. The very idea of chance, is something which is above all control. I will, therefore, apply Dr. F.'s ideas of freedom, to this subject, in Dr. F.'s own language, with some slight additions, which I will enclose in brackets :

"The will—in all its operations, is governed and irresistibly controlled, by some secret impulse [of chance] some fixed and all controlling arrangement [of chance]. It is altogether futile then, to talk about free-agency under such a constitution [of chance]: the very spring of motion to the whole intellectual machinery, is under the influence of [the] secret invincible power [of chance]. And it *must* move as that power directs, for it is the hand of [Omnipotent chance] that urges it on. He *can* act as he *wills*, it is true, but the whole responsibility consists in the volition, and this is the result of [the] propelling power [of chance]. He wills as he is *made* to will [by chance], he chooses as he *must* choose [by chance]. And can a man, upon the known and universally acknowledged principles of responsibility, be accountable for such a volition."

I do not hesitate to affirm, that there is no such thing as chance. But if there were any such thing, it would hardly suit Dr. F.'s purpose. The freedom Dr. F. seems to be seeking after, is something more than freedom from involuntary restraint and compulsion. It is freedom in the most absolute sense of that word. And his choices, to be *absolutely* free, must be free not only from *causation* and from *necessity*, but from *chance*, and from every thing which can account for their existence. As these choices must be free from causation, they must not cause themselves; they must not be caused by one another; they must not be caused by a principle, nor by any other cause whatever. As they must be free from necessity, they must not be self-existent and eternal, but begin to exist. As they must be free from every thing over which they have no control, they must be free from chance; and of course not come into existence without a cause. Such appears to be the analysis of Dr. F.'s self-determining principle. But perhaps when Dr. F. shall write another discourse against the doctrine of predestination he will give a satisfactory explanation of this self-determining principle. If he will do this, he will doubtless receive the sincere thanks of the public, as well as the grateful acknowledgements of his friend.



NUMBER IX.

Dr. Fisk says:

"It is argued, I know, that man is responsible, because he feels that he acts freely, and that he might have done otherwise. To this I reply, that this is a good argument, on our principles, to prove that men are free—but on the Calvinistic ground, it only proves, that God hath deceived us. It has made us *feel* that we might do otherwise, but *he knows*

we cannot—he has *determined* we *shall not*. So that in fact, this argument makes the system more objectionable. While it does not change the fact in the case, it attributes deception to the Almighty. It is logically true, therefore, from this doctrine, that man is not a free-agent, and therefore not responsible. A moral agent to be free must be possessed of a self-determining principle. Make the will any thing short of this, and you put all the volitions, and of course the whole moral man, under foreign and irresistible influences.”

Here Dr. F. takes it for granted, that predestination destroys our power to act otherwise than what we do. But this is not true. God decreed that Joseph should be sold into Egypt. But his brethren had power to forbear selling him. God decreed that Pharaoh should not give the Children of Israel permission to go out of his land. But Pharaoh had power to give them that permission. He decreed that David should number Israel and Judah, but David had power to forbear doing that act.

When God decrees that his creatures shall do a thing, He decrees that they shall have a natural power to do it. But a natural power to do a thing *implies* a natural power to *neglect* doing it. So that whenever He decrees that his creatures shall do a thing, He decrees that they shall have a natural power to neglect doing it. A man may be said to have a natural power to do a thing, when he has all that strength of body and mind which he needs in order to do it. But it requires no more strength to forbear doing a thing, than it requires to do it. When God decrees that they shall do a thing, He decrees that they shall have strength to do it. And He cannot decree that they shall have strength to do it, without decreeing that they shall have strength enough to neglect doing it: for the *former* necessarily includes the *latter*. Men cannot fulfil the Divine decrees, without natural strength to fulfil them. And they cannot have natural strength to fulfil the Divine decrees without strength enough to neglect fulfilling them. A natural power to *fulfil* the Divine decrees, therefore, necessarily implies a natural power to *frustrate* them.

But perhaps Dr. F. will say, that a natural power in men to frustrate the Divine decrees implies, that they have more power than God. I answer, It implies no such thing; and that, for two reasons.

1. For this natural power to fulfil or frustrate the Divine decrees, men are entirely dependent. And 2. They are entirely dependent for the EXERCISE of this natural power. By the *exercise* of this

natural power, I mean their *choice*. It is this exercise which constitutes their *moral* power. So that while God renders men *naturally* ABLE to frustrate his decrees, He renders them *morally* UNABLE.

God has, therefore, both the natural and moral power of men in his hands, and will do all his pleasure. Although He has given them a natural power to *frustrate* his decrees, He can easily cause them to *fulfil* his decrees. And He does cause them to fulfil his decrees, by controlling their wills. Should Dr. F. still deny this distinction between the *natural ability* and *moral inability* to frustrate the decrees of God; let him answer the following questions. Did not God decree that Pharaoh should refuse to let the children of Israel depart out of his land? Notwithstanding this decree, was not Pharaoh naturally able to let them go? If not, why was he *commanded* to let them go, and punished for *refusing*? Did not God decree, that David should say, "Go number Israel and Judah"? Notwithstanding this decree, was not David naturally able to neglect doing this act? If not, why did David acknowledge, that he had sinned? and why did God punish him with a *pestilence*? Did not God decree that Paul and his company should be preserved in shipwreck, and arrive safe to land? Notwithstanding this decree, were not the mariners naturally able to frustrate this design, by fleeing out of the ship? If not, why did Paul say, "Except these abide in the ship ye cannot be saved."?

Why is it more absurd, to suppose, that men are naturally able to act contrary to what God has decreed; than it is to suppose that they are naturally able to act contrary to what God fore-knows. And yet Dr. F. himself believes, that men are naturally able to act contrary to what God fore-knows. Dr. F. believes, that God always fore-knew, that men would act precisely as they do: and yet he believes and contends, that men are naturally able to act otherwise from what they do. But if the Divine fore-knowledge be consistent with such a natural ability; then the Divine decrees and agency must be equally consistent with it.

Give men all the natural ability which Dr. Fisk contends for: and still it must have been true from eternity, that men would act just as they do. And if it was always true, that they would act as they do; then it was always certain. Indeed Dr. F. admits (p. p. 6. 7.)

that God fore-knows future events, because they are certain. He says, "It is not at all difficult to conceive how the certainty of an event can beget knowledge," and "whatever God fore-sees will undoubtedly come to pass." Now only admit a previous certainty of human actions, and you admit the only difficulty which is involved in the Divine decrees and agency, on this point. If the Divine decrees and agency are inconsistent with our natural ability and moral freedom, it is solely on this ground: *that they render our actions previously certain*. But this previous certainty exists, and is admitted by Dr. Fisk. If natural ability and moral freedom are consistent with such a previous CERTAINTY; then they must be equally consistent with the GROUND or REASON of that *certainty*. Only admit the certainty itself, and how do I increase the difficulty, by going a step *further*, and saying that this certainty *depends* on something? What new difficulty do the Scriptures throw in the way, by representing God as working all things after the counsel of his own will? If there is any difficulty *here* it consists not in the Divine WILL, but in that CERTAINTY, which *depends* upon it. If Dr. F. will show, how free-agency and ability can be reconciled with this previous CERTAINTY; he will thereby show, how they can be reconciled with the GROUND on which that certainty *depends*: and his objection against the Divine decrees, on this point, will vanish away.

Should Dr. F. resort again to his "*self-determining principle*," I will follow him with his permission. If he will prove, that his *self-determining principle* is consistent with the Divine *fore-knowledge*, I will prove in the same way, that it is consistent with the *Divine decrees*. If he will prove that it is consistent with a previous *certainty*, I will prove in the same way, that it is consistent with the *universal decrees and agency of God*.

In this and the preceding number I have shown, that free-agency consists in choosing, and not in a self-determining principle; that a self-determining principle is a palpable absurdity; and that men have a *natural* though not a *moral* power to frustrate the decrees of God. Dr. F.'s objection, therefore, that predestination is inconsistent with free-agency, falls entirely to the ground. I am now ready to proceed to the next objection.

"3. Another strong objection to the doctrine we oppose is, it arrays God's secret decrees against his revealed word. God commands men not to sin, and ordains, that they shall sin. In his word, he sets before them, in striking relief, motives of fear and hope, for the express purpose as he informs us, "that they sin not"; but by his predestination and secret counsel, he irresistibly impels them in an opposite course, for the express purpose as this doctrine informs us, to secure their transgression. *His* rule of action is in direct opposition to *our* rule of duty. And yet he is the author of both! Is God at war with himself, or is he sporting and trifling with his creatures? Or is it not more probable than either that the premises are false? When or where has God ever taught us, that he has two opposing wills? A character so suspicious, to say the least of it, ought not without the most unequivocal evidence, to be attributed to the adorable Jehovah. In his word we are taught that he is "of one mind"—that his "ways are equal"; and who can doubt it?"

Dr. F. then adds:

"We are told, it is true, to relieve the difficulty, that this seeming contradiction is one of the mysteries of God's incomprehensible nature."

Who has told Dr. F. "that this seeming contradiction is one of the mysteries of God's incomprehensible nature"? I presume, the Dr. has not heard this from Hopkinsians, nor from well informed Calvinists. The most consistent writers on this subject do not admit, that the difficulty stated in the above objection, amounts either to a contradiction or a mystery. On the contrary, they contend, that it admits of a clear and satisfactory solution. Let the two following distinctions be properly made, and the above objection will fall to the ground.

The first is the distinction between what God chooses, in *itself* considered, and what he chooses *on the whole*. And the second is the distinction between the *commands* of God and his *decrees*. The first of these distinctions Dr. F. has virtually made himself. Speaking of the hypocrisy of moderate Calvinists, he says, (p. 30.):

"This is a subject, permit me here to say, on which I touch with more reluctance, than upon any other point, involved in this controversy. To represent the thing as it is, seems so much like accusing our brethren of insincerity and duplicity, that nothing but a regard to truth, would induce me to allude to it."

Here Dr. F. virtually makes the distinction between a thing's being *undesirable* in itself considered, and *desirable* all things considered; and between his *not* choosing a thing for its *own* sake, and his choosing it on the whole. He exposed the insincerity and duplicity of semi-Calvinists reluctantly for the sake of truth. In itself considered, he was unwilling to make the exposure: but all things

considered; considering the demands of truth, he chose to perform the painful task. This distinction is made every day in common life. It is made in every instance in which a man is said to do a thing unwillingly, or reluctantly. And it is also very clearly implied in Scripture. In itself considered, God does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men. And yet all things considered, He does choose to afflict and grieve them. In itself considered, He takes no delight in the death of him that dieth. And yet all things considered, He chooses that incorrigible sinners should die. In *itself* considered, He is not willing that any should perish. And yet all things considered, (p. 9.) “*The Lord hath destined the wicked for the day of evil, and this shall be for his glory.*” In itself considered, Christ wished the cup to pass from him. But all things considered, He drank it to the very dregs. In itself considered, the Father would gladly have exempted his beloved Son from suffering. But all things considered, ‘It pleased the Lord to bruise him, and put him to grief.’ But I will not insult the understanding of Dr. F. and of my Methodist brethren, so grossly as to suspect, that they cannot see a distinction which is so plain. I shall, therefore, for the present, consider it as a settled point, that God may consistently choose an event in itself considered, which he does not choose on the whole: and that He may be unwilling in itself considered, that an event should take place, and yet, all things considered, choose that it should take place. I am now ready, therefore, to consider,

The second distinction, which is the distinction between the Divine decrees and the Divine commands. And here, for the sake of Dr. F. I will cite a few Scripture examples. God said to Pharaoh, “Let my people go, that they may serve me”. This was his command. Nevertheless, the Lord said unto Moses, “But I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go”; this was his decree. “Honor thy father and thy mother”; this was a Divine command. “Thus saith the Lord, Behold I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house”; this was a Divine decree, which was fulfilled in the conduct of Absalom, the son of David. “Thou shalt not commit adultery”; this was the command of God. “And I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbor, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun.

For thou didst it secretly : but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun." This was his decree. "Thou shalt not kill"; this was a command. "Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thy house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife"; this was the decree. "Thou shalt not bear false witness"; this was a Divine command. "And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth and do so. Now, therefore, Behold the Lord hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the Lord hath spoken evil concerning thee." This was the Divine decree. "Thou shalt not covet," was a Divine command. "Behold the days come, that all that is in thy house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store unto this day, shall be carried into Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the Lord"; this was the Divine decree. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me"; this was an express command. "And the Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from one end of the earth even unto the other, and there shalt thou serve other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, even wood and stone"; this was a Divine decree. "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image,—thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them"; this was a Divine command. "And the spirit of Egypt shall fail in the midst thereof: and I will destroy the counsel thereof: and they shall seek to the idols"; this was a Divine decree. "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain"; this was a Divine command. "And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every God, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that is determined shall be done": this was a Divine decree. "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy"; this was a Divine command. "And he shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change times and laws"; this was a Divine decree. "Be not deceived," is a Divine command. "For this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie," this is a Divine decree. It would be easy to multiply examples: but those already adduced are sufficient to illustrate the

distinction between the Divine decrees and the Divine commands. Dr. Fisk says,

“But it is not a *seeming* contradiction, it is a real one; not an insolvable mystery, but a palpable absurdity. *God prohibits the sinful act—God ordains and procures the sinful act—God wills the salvation of the reprobate, whom he has from all eternity irreversibly ordained to eternal death.* When I can embrace such opposite propositions,” &c.

But wherein does the contradiction consist, between the commands of God and his decrees? A contradiction consists in affirming and denying the same thing. And wherein consists the absurdity of the scripture examples adduced above? An absurdity is an inconsistency. To say that God commands a thing, and does not command it, is a contradiction. To say that He decrees a thing, and does not decree it, is a contradiction. To say that He wills a thing, and does not will it, in the same sense is likewise a contradiction. Now if the commands and decrees of God were the same, they would indeed be contradictory and absurd. But they are not the same. They differ in several important respects. The commands of God respect the *nature* of things; but his decrees respect them as *events*. The commands of God depend on the distinction between what is right and what is wrong in the conduct of his creatures. But his decrees are not built upon this distinction; but upon the distinction between what is for the *best*, and what is not for the best all things considered. He *requires* of us what is right for *us* to do: and He determines to do himself, what is right and best for *Him* to do. He forbids of us, what is wrong for *us* to do, and He *determines not* to do Himself what would be wrong for *him* to do. His commands express what He chooses in *itself* considered; but his decrees express what He chooses *all things* considered. His precepts and prohibitions express what He loves and what He hates for their *own sake*; but his decrees do not. He decrees that many things shall exist, which He perfectly hates; and that many things shall *not* exist, which he ardently loves. His commands are clothed with authority; but his decrees are not clothed with authority. He commands as a *Legislator*; but He decrees only as a *Sovereign*. His commands are the rule of our conduct; but his decrees are the rule of his conduct.

Dr. F. thinks, that if God requires an act which He has *not decreed*, and decrees that an act shall take place which He has *forbid-*

den; then “*his* rule of action is in direct opposition to *our* rule of duty.” But how so? *His* rule of action is his will of *decree*; and our rule of duty is his will of *command*. Is there any opposition between his will of command and his will of decree? Dr. F. represents them as two opposing wills. But is it so? If God’s will of decree and his will of command were to be understood in the *same* sense, they would indeed be diametrically opposed to each other in all those scripture examples which I have just cited. But his will of *decree* and his will of *command*, as has been already shown, are NOT to be understood in the same sense; and therefore are *not opposed* to each other. There would be an opposition between his choosing a thing, and choosing it not, in the same sense. But there is no opposition between his *choosing* a thing in *one* sense, and *choosing it not*, in *another* sense. If He *willed* a thing⁵ for its own sake, and yet *willed it not*, for its own sake, or if He *willed* a thing, all things considered, and yet *willed it not*, all things considered, He would have two opposing wills. But this He does not do. In all those scripture examples which were cited above, God’s will of command, and his will of decree, are to be understood in different senses; and, therefore, they do not oppose and destroy each other. God’s will of decree does not destroy his will of command; nor does it destroy our obligation to *obey* his will of command. Our obligation to obey his will of command, is founded on our natural ability; and the Divine decree, as was shown in my preceeding number, leave our *natural* ability unimpaired.



NUMBER X.

I have already answered Dr. F.’s three first objections against the doctrine of predestination, and am now ready to answer his next objection.

“4. In close connection with the foregoing objection, it may be added, that this system mars, if it does not destroy, the moral attributes of God.”

This objection is founded on the foregoing objections; and in answering those, I have virtually answered this. I have shown that predestination does not make God a sinner; that it does not destroy the natural ability, free-agency and accountability of man; and that

it implies no opposition to God's revealed will, which is the rule of our duty. Hence it follows, that predestination neither destroys, nor mars the moral attributes of God. Dr. F. says,

"If He holds men responsible for what is unavoidable," &c.

The word "*unavoidable*" is ambiguous. It sometimes denotes what we have not natural strength to prevent; and sometimes merely denotes what is infallibly *certain*. In order to impeach the character of God, it must be made to appear, that He holds us responsible for what is unavoidable in the *first* sense; that He makes us accountable for involuntary things, which we have not natural strength to avoid. But this He does not do. He has given us all the natural strength we need, in order to be moral agents; and he holds us responsible only for our voluntary, and moral conduct. Dr. Fisk continues,

"If He makes laws, and then impels men to break them, and finally punishes them for their transgressions," &c.

The word "*impels*" in this connection conveys a wrong idea. The Dr.'s phraseology seems to imply, that men are forced to break the Divine commands against their wills; and that they have no natural power to avoid breaking them. But predestination neither counteracts our natural strength; nor forces us against our wills. It only renders it infallibly *certain*, that we shall *freely* or *voluntarily* act as we do. That it is previously *certain*, that men will act as they do, Dr. F. virtually acknowledges, as we have already seen. But this certainty, or necessity of human action is a *moral* necessity, and not a *natural*. It is a necessity of moral exercises; a necessity which is consistent with praise and blame, reward and punishment. That previous certainty which Dr. F. contends for, he would doubtless say, is consistent with the desert of praise and blame, reward and punishment. But the fact, that this previous certainty depends on the Divine will, does not, in this respect, alter the case at all. Dr. F. goes on to say,

"If he mourns over the evils of the world, and expostulates with sinners, saying, 'How can I give thee up—my heart is melted within me, my repentings are kindled together'—'O Jerusalem! Jerusalem! how oft would I have gathered you, and ye would not'—and still he himself 'impels the will of men' to all this wickedness—if, I say God does all this, where is his veracity? Where is his mercy? Where is his justice? What more could be said of the most merciless tyrant? What of the most arrant hypocrite? What does this doctrine make of our Heavenly

Father? I shudder to follow it out of its legitimate bearings. It seems to me, that a belief of it is enough to drive one to infidelity, to madness, and to death."

Is this reasoning, or is it declamation? If it be reasoning, I must undertake to answer it.

"And still he himself impels the will of men to all this wickedness."

Answer. Predestination does not imply, that God impels the wills of men, according to the literal import of that word; but only that "It is God that worketh in you to will and to do," and that "He worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." His working in us to will and to do, does not prevent our willing and doing.

"Where is his veracity?"

Answer. In his Holy Word; not even excepting the two passages of Scripture which I have just cited.

"Where is his mercy?"

Answer. In his saving penitent sinners from that endless misery which they deserve to suffer.

"Where is his justice?"

Answer. In punishing some of his creatures according to their deserts, and treating none of his creatures worse than they deserve.

"What more could be said of the most merciless tyrant?"

Answer. As much more, as can be said of total selfishness, contrasted with disinterested and infinite benevolence.

"What of the most arrant hypocrite?"

Answer. "Nay, but, O man, who art thou, that repliest against God." "Let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged."

"What does this doctrine make of our Heavenly Father?"

Answer. It exhibits Him as a God of infinite wisdom, of infinite benevolence, and of infinite power. It teaches, that in infinite wisdom, He devised the best possible plan of operation; that He adopted that plan in infinite benevolence; and that He is carrying it into execution in infinite power.

"I shudder to follow it out of its legitimate bearings."

Answer. I regret that Dr. F. should shudder at his own terrors. If he would only 'follow out the doctrine into its *legitimate* bearings,' his objections against it, would speedily desert him. The Dr. says,

'he REJOICES that the supporters of this system can close their eyes against its logical consequences.' On the contrary, we REGRET that Arminians can close their eyes against the logical consequences of our system and their own.

I am now ready to examine Dr. F.'s last objection against the doctrine of predestination.

"5. It puts a plea into the mouth of sinners to justify themselves in their sins, and lead to universalism and infidelity. They reason thus. Whatever God decrees is according to his will, and therefore right. And God will not punish his creatures for doing right. Whatever God decrees is unavoidable, and God will not punish his creatures for what is unavoidable. But "every action and motion of every creature is governed by the hidden counsel of God." Therefore, God will not punish any of his creatures for any of their acts. Now who can point out any fallacy in this reasoning? If, therefore, predestination be true, universalism is true, according to the universally acknowledged principles of justice."

Answer. The fallacy of the above reasoning depends upon two false *principles*, which were fully exposed in my last number. One of these principles is, that whatever God decrees is according to his will of command, and therefore right. And the other principle is, that whatever God decrees men shall do, they have no natural power to avoid doing. Only make the distinction between God's will of decree and his will of command; and the distinction between natural and moral ability; and who could help discovering the fallacy of the reasoning which Dr. F. has put into the mouths of universalists. Universalists in general, however, would not be willing to acknowledge the Dr.'s reasoning on this subject as a fair specimen of their own. Universalists in general do not deny, that God will punish any of his creatures for any of their acts. On the contrary, they generally maintain, that God *will* punish his creatures, and punish them fully, either in this life, or the life to come; though they deny, that he will punish them forever. Modern Universalists contend for a full punishment in this life, and Restorationists contend for a limited punishment in the future life. Dr. F. proceeds:

"And it is a notorious fact, that modern Universalism, which is prevailing so generally through the country, rests for its chief support on the doctrine of predestination."

But it is not predestination, as explained and maintained by Calvinists, on which Universalism rests for its chief support. On the contrary, the principles of Arminianism lie at the very foundation of

the doctrine of Universal salvation. Arminians and Universalists agree essentially in their representations of the Divine character; in their representations of the ultimate end of creation and providence; in their views of human nature; in discarding the distinction between God's will of command and his will of decree; the distinction between what He chooses in *itself* considered, and what He chooses *all things* considered; the distinction between natural and moral ability; and the distinction between selfishness and disinterested benevolence.

The Arminian says, that there is no such thing as disinterested benevolence. The Universalist says the same. The Universalist infers, that there is no essential difference between saints and sinners; and of course that all will fare alike in the world to come. And if the principle assumed were true, the inference would be strictly just. The Arminian says, that the goodness of God must lead Him to desire the holiness and happiness of every one of his creatures all things considered. The Universalist says the same. The Universalist infers, that Omnipotence will secure what Infinite goodness on the whole desires; and consequently, that all mankind will be forever holy and happy. If the principle assumed were true, the inference would be strictly just. The Arminian denies the distinction which Calvinists make between God's will of command and his will of decree; and also the distinction between his choosing a thing, in itself considered, and his choosing it all things considered. The Universalist does the same; and quotes passages like the following: "Who will have all men to be saved." The Arminian and Universalist both understand such passages, as teaching, that God wills the salvation of all mankind, all things considered. The Universalist infers, since God's counsel shall stand, and He will do all his pleasure, that all mankind will be saved. If the premises were true, the inference would be strictly just. There is, therefore, an intimate connection between Arminian principles and Universalism.

No person, I venture to say, was ever led into Universalism by reasoning upon Calvinistic principles. Whenever a once professing Calvinist has become a Universalist, he has first adopted Arminian maxims. And having taken one step towards Universalism, he has found the next step comparatively easy. I presume a Universalist cannot be found, who has not adopted and who does not retain

some of the fundamental principles of Arminianism. "Others having seen, as they thought, that the Scriptures would not support the doctrine of Universalism, and that matter of fact seemed to contradict the above reasoning, in as much as men are made to suffer even in this life for their sins, have leaped over all scriptural bounds into infidelity." Dr. F. says, 'he has personally known numbers who have been driven by the doctrine of predestination, into open infidelity.' Here is an important concession. The Dr. has virtually acknowledged, that men do not become infidels by *embracing* but by *rejecting* the doctrine of predestination. They are not *allured* by this doctrine, but to use the Dr.'s phraseology they are "*driven*" by it into open infidelity. This circumstance is strong presumptive evidence in favor of the doctrine. For, infidelity arises not from *love*, but from *hatred* to the truth. "Because they received not the love of the truth that they may be saved; therefore He shall send them strong delusion, that they may believe a lie." On the other hand, no man was ever *driven* into infidelity by Arminianism; but thousands have been allured into it, by adhering to Arminian principles.

Dr. F. thinks that Fatalism is closely allied to Calvinian predestination. Let Fatalism, however, only be defined, and we shall soon see, whether the Dr.'s assertion is correct. Fatalism teaches that all things were certain from eternity; but that this certainty does not depend on the Divine will, nor on any cause whatever. Now what does Arminianism teach? It admits, that all things were *fore-known*, and of course certain from eternity; and yet it teaches, that this previous certainty, so far at least as it respects human actions, does not depend on the Divine will, nor on any cause whatever. What does Calvinism teach? It teaches that this previous certainty does depend on the Divine will. Fatalism denies the distinction between natural and moral ability; and so does Arminianism. This distinction however, Calvinism admits. It is susceptible of strict demonstration, therefore, that Fatalism is directly opposed to Calvinism; and very closely allied in its principles to Arminianism. "And it is well known (p. 14.) that the doctrine of fate—is the element in which infidelity "lives and moves, and has its being." "

NUMBER XI.

I have now shown, that Dr. Fisk has not refuted those arguments which he professes to refute; and that he has urged no solid objections against the doctrine in question. But before I dismiss the doctrine of predestination, I must urge some arguments in favor of it, which the Dr. has not yet considered.

The first argument which I shall here adduce, is founded on the dependence of creatures. Constant and entire dependence is involved in the very idea of a created nature. Independence is an underived, essential, and incommunicable attribute of the Divine Being. Independent action can belong only to independent existence. Independent existence is self-existence. And self-existence is necessarily underived and eternal. We must *exist* in order to *act*; and *exist* INDEPENDENTLY in order to *act* INDEPENDENTLY. To suppose, therefore, that God has communicated to us an independent power of acting, is to suppose, that He has communicated to us an independent existence. And to suppose that He has communicated to us an independent existence, is to suppose, that He has communicated to his *creatures* an *uncreated* existence. The necessary, constant and entire dependence of creatures upon God, therefore, clearly demonstrates, that "Of him and through him and to him are all things;" and that 'He literally works all things after the counsel of his own will.'

My next argument is founded on the relation of cause and effect. Every thing which does not exist by necessity, is an effect, and must have a cause adequate to its production. Unless this be admitted, it cannot be shown, that there are any effects in existence; and in this case we should have no means left, of proving the existence of God. To deny, therefore, that every thing which does not exist by necessity, is an effect, leads directly to Atheism. But creatures do not *exist* by the necessity of their own nature, and consequently cannot *move* and *act* by any such necessity. Hence all our motions and actions are effects. Every one of them must have a cause. But the first cause of all things is God, and since the whole chain of causes and effects depends upon his WILL, He must have fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass.

My third argument is founded on the certainty of future events. This argument is indeed similar to the one founded on the Divine fore-knowledge; but it may be presented in a different light. It was forever *true*, that all things would come to pass just as they do; and what was forever *true*, was forever *certain*. It was certain from all eternity, therefore, that all events would come to pass just as they actually do. But on what did this certainty depend? Did it depend on nothing? To say, it depended on nothing, is the doctrine of Fatalism, which is a gross absurdity. It must, therefore, have depended on something, either in the Divine Being, or out of the Divine Being. This certainty from all eternity, could not have depended upon any cause out of the Divine Being; for no other cause has existed from eternity. This previous certainty, then, must have depended on some cause within the Divine Being. This cause was not the Divine perfections alone. The perfections of God can secure the existence of no events, independently of the Divine will. This previous certainty, therefore, must have depended on the Divine will, and God must have fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass.

My fourth argument is founded on the Divine perfections. God is infinite, unchangeable and eternal, in all the perfections of his nature. But a denial of the Divine decrees, virtually impeaches the Divine perfections.

It impeaches the Divine wisdom. It is the province of perfect wisdom to discern the best end, and devise the best means for its accomplishment. The perfect wisdom of God, must from all eternity, have discerned and dictated the best possible plan of operation; a plan including every event which would be necessary to the greatest good, and precluding every event which would be unnecessary to this end. If God has acted according to the dictates of infinite wisdom; then He has, from eternity, chosen the existence of all those events which were necessary, and the non-existence of all those which were unnecessary to the greatest good. But if He has done this, then His decrees extend to whatsoever comes to pass. To say He has not done this, therefore, is the same as to say, that his will is not under the direction of infinite wisdom; and that He is unwise in practice.

To deny the universal decrees of God, is to impeach his goodness.

Goodness is voluntary in its own nature. It essentially consists in good will, or benevolent intention. This, also, is the very essence of the Divine decrees. To limit the decrees of God, therefore, is to limit his good will; and to limit his good will is to limit his goodness. To say that his decrees are not universal, is the same as to say, that his goodness is not universal. If his decrees do not extend to whatsoever comes to pass, his goodness does not. The goodness of God must necessarily choose the existence of all those events which are necessary, and the non-existence of all those events which are unnecessary to the greatest good. To deny the universality of his decrees, therefore, is to deny the universality of his benevolent intentions, and impeach his goodness.

To deny that God has decreed whatsoever comes to pass, is to impeach his power. It is the same as to say, that some events exist independently of his will, and are above his control. Those who maintain, that God has *not decreed* the moral exercises of His creatures, affirm, and find it necessary to affirm, in order to maintain their ground, that God *cannot cause* the moral exercises of his creatures. But to affirm this, is to impeach the Divine power. There are three cases in which it may be said, without limiting the power of God, that He cannot do certain things. 1. There are some things which he cannot do, merely because they are against his will. This mode of expression denotes a *moral* inability on the part of God, and *not a natural*. Thus: when it is said, that God *cannot* lie, nor break his promise, nor do wrong, the meaning is that He *will* not: or, which is the same thing, that He is voluntarily and unchangeably true, and faithful and righteous. 2. It may be said with reverence, that God cannot cause that which exists by the necessity of its own nature. He cannot create space; for space exists by the necessity of its own nature. He cannot make two and two equal to four; for two and two are equal to four, by the necessity of their own nature. These things do not depend upon the Divine will, because they cannot depend upon it. 3. It is proper to say, that God cannot do that which involves a contradiction. He cannot cause a thing to exist and not to exist at the same time. He cannot make the whole less than its parts. He cannot make a creature a creator. He cannot communicate self-existence; nor make *dependence, independence*. God has not power to do these

things, because they are not the objects of power. The very existence of these things implies a contradiction and absurdity.

But not one of the above mentioned cases applies to the moral exercises of men. Those who deny the universal decrees of God, do not mean, merely, that He is *morally* unable to cause the moral exercises of men. They do not mean, that He *cannot* cause them, merely because He *will* not. They cannot maintain their ground, without denying, that the decrees and agency of God, are consistent with the moral agency of men. They cannot consistently mean, that if God decrees and causes the moral exercises of men; then they *have no* moral exercises, to be decreed and caused. They cannot consistently mean this; for this would be a plain contradiction and absurdity. And if they do not mean this, when they say, that predestination destroys our moral agency; then they must mean, if they have any meaning at all, that moral exercises are of such a nature that they cannot possibly be produced by Divine power. Now if the existence of our moral exercises were in itself necessary; it would be no limitation of the power of God to say, that He cannot cause them. But they do *not* exist by a necessity of nature. This is not even pretended by Arminians. Will it be said then, that God cannot cause moral exercises to exist, because their existence involves a contradiction and absurdity? Surely not. Moral exercises in the hearts of men, do exist in reality; and no *reality* can either be contradictory or absurd. Now if the existence of our moral exercises is not in itself necessary, and if their existence involves no contradiction nor absurdity; then it is a limitation of the power of God, to say, that He cannot cause them. For Omnipotence can cause any thing to exist, whose existence is not in itself necessary, and whose existence does not involve a contradiction or absurdity. The denial of the Divine decrees, therefore, leads directly to a limitation of the power of God, and the denial of his Omnipotence.

My fifth argument is founded on the absurdity of a self-determining principle. Those who deny that God has decreed the voluntary exercises of men; cannot maintain their ground, without holding to a self-determining principle in the human will. Such a self-determining principle is absurd. Its absurdity I have already partially exposed. I have shown, that it implies the absurdity, that we

choose and exist by the necessity of our natures; or the absurdity that every one of our choices is produced by an endless series of choices, which we have before we begin to choose; or the absurdity, that every one of our choices is caused by an endless series of involuntary causing acts; or the absurdity, that our choices all come into existence by chance.

This self-determining principle, however, involves other absurdities and inconsistencies. A *self-determining* principle is an *independent* principle. And for this *independent* principle we must of course be *dependent*. A self-determining principle in creatures, therefore, involves the absurdity of a *dependent* species of *independence*.

A *self-determining* principle is an *ungovernable* principle. And this ungovernable principle in creatures, must be a created principle. A self-determining principle in creatures, therefore, involves the absurdity, that God has created what he cannot govern.

A *self-determining* principle is an *originating* principle. And an *originating* principle of choice, is a *creating* principle; a principle which produces something out of nothing. And this creating principle in creatures is itself created. A self-determining principle of choice, in creatures, therefore, involves the absurdity, that God has created a creative power.

A self-determining principle in the human will is inconsistent with the doctrine of regeneration. God has said, that 'his people shall be willing in the day of his power.' But it is as impossible for a *self-determining* principle to be *changed*, as for a *self-existent* principle to be *annihilated*. A self-determining principle could not be changed by any external cause; nor would it ever change itself. Its operations would be similar to the operations of that ideal machine, called "*a perpetual motion*;" always producing the same kind of results. It is evident, that there can be no change in a self-determining principle, UNLESS this principle consists in CHANCE, so as to render our acts of choice absolutely *contingent* and *uncertain*. If this be the meaning of a self-determining principle, and men possess it, then it is impossible for *God* to convert a sinner, and it depends upon *chance* whether he will convert himself. It would be impossible for *God* to sanctify saints; and it would depend entirely upon *chance* whether they would sanctify themselves. It would be impossible for *God* to confirm the saints in holiness after

they arrive in heaven ; and it would depend upon chance whether they would continue holy, and remain in that holy and happy place. A self-determining principle, therefore, is inconsistent with the doctrine of *regeneration*, the doctrine of sanctification, and the promises of eternal life.

The leading maxim on which the theory of a self-determining principle is built, is inconsistent with the doctrine of human depravity. This maxim is, That the quality of an act belongs to its cause, or origin. And this maxim subverts the doctrine of human depravity. If it be said, that our sinful choices are caused by a self-determining principle ; this maxim will transfer all our depravity to this self-determining principle. But this self-determining principle must have a cause too, and that cause must be God. This maxim, therefore, will transfer all our depravity to this self-determining principle, and from thence to our Creator. Let our choices be caused by what they may, this maxim will transfer the guilt of them from one cause to another, till it reaches the first cause of all things. If it be said, that our choices are originated by *chance* ; this maxim will transfer all our depravity to *chance*. If it be said, that our choices have no cause, or origin, this maxim would fix the blame no where. If our choices are every one the effect of choice, this maxim would transfer all our depravity to a choice before our first choice. The fundamental maxim, therefore, on which the theory of a self-determining principle is built, entirely subverts the doctrine of human depravity. It either drives all depravity out of the universe, or fixes it all on God.

A self-determining principle in the human will is inconsistent even with that theory of moral suasion, which Arminians have invented, in order to extricate themselves from the perplexing difficulties and absurdities of their system. A self-determining principle, is a principle which is independent of all extraneous and foreign influence. A principle which determines itself is one which is not, and which *cannot be* determined by truth, duty or interest. It cannot be moved by precepts or prohibitions, promises or threatenings, rewards or punishments, or any motives whatever. That self-determining principle, on which the denial of predestination is built, is of all absurdities the most absurd. And if the denial of predestination leads to absurdities, the doctrine must be true.

NUMBER XII.

The doctrine, that *God has fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass*, includes the doctrines, that God has determined the character as well as the salvation of the elect. In preceding numbers, I have shown, that the objections which Dr. Fisk alleges against the doctrine of predestination are without foundation; that the doctrine stands supported by those very arguments which he undertakes to refute; and that it is fully demonstrated by other arguments, which the Dr. passes over in silence. The doctrine, that God has fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass, therefore, rests on a solid and immoveable foundation; and while this doctrine shall stand, the doctrine of unconditional election will also stand. It would seem, therefore, that I might dismiss the remainder of the Dr.'s sermon, in which he attempts to show, that election is conditional; or that God merely decreed the salvation of believers, without decreeing that they should *become* believers. But, although this would be permitted in a dispute, it would be hardly justifiable in a review. I must give no occasion of complaint that I have not treated Dr. F. with all that attention which he deserves. "Let us pass then to the next proposition."

"11. We come to examine predestination in its particular relation to election."

Dr. F. justly observes that,

"Several kinds of election are spoken of in the scriptures. There is an election of individuals, to perform certain duties appointed by God.—There is an election of whole communities and nations to the enjoyment of certain peculiar privileges.—There is a third election—an election unto eternal life, and this is the one which has given rise to the great controversy in the Church."

Dr. Fisk proceeds to state the doctrine of election as maintained by Calvinists:

"Those who contend for predestination as objected to by us, maintain that—"By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others fore-ordained to everlasting death. Those of mankind, that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world, hath chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory, *without any foresight of faith or good works.*"

The last clause of this statement, "*without any foresight of faith or good works,*" is elliptical. The term *previous* or *antecedent*, must be understood. The meaning is, that the elect were chosen in

Christ, without any *previous* or *antecedent* fore-sight of faith or good works ; that is, God did not *fore-see*, that their faith and good works *would* exist, before He *decreed* that they *should* exist. God *did* fore-see the faith and good works of the elect, but not *antecedently* either in the order of time, or in the order of nature, to his eternal purpose which He proposed in Christ Jesus our Lord, concerning their saving faith and good works. I make this remark, in order to guard the above statement against the misapprehension of Arminians.

Dr. F. next gives a statement of conditional election as maintained by Arminians. :

“Others, and this also is our doctrine, hold that “God did decree from the beginning, to elect or choose in Christ, all that should believe unto salvation, and this decree proceeds from his own goodness, and is not built on any goodness of the creature : and that God did from the beginning decree to reprobate all who should finally and obstinately continue in unbelief.” Thus it is seen from the statement of the two doctrines, that ours is an election of character, and so far as it relates to individuals, it relates to them only as they are fore-seen to possess that character ; whereas the other relates to individuals, without any reference to character.”

On this last extract I will make the following remarks :

1. The conditional election which Dr. F. and other Arminians contend for, implies, that God has not decreed the conversion, and sanctification of the elect. Says the Dr. : “*Ours is an election of character, and so far as it relates to individuals, it relates to them only as they are fore-seen to possess that character.*” The character here referred to, is the character of persevering believers. “God did decree from the beginning to elect, or choose in Christ all that should believe unto salvation.” The Dr.’s meaning evidently is, that God did not decree, that they should believe in Christ, but decreed to save them because He fore-saw that they *would believe in him*, and persevere in their faith and obedience until death. Let it be distinctly understood, then, that the conditional election which Arminians contend for, implies, that God has not decreed the regeneration and sanctification of the elect ; but left their regeneration and sanctification entirely to themselves. To say that God has decreed the regeneration and sanctification of the elect, as well as their salvation, is to assert most explicitly and fully the Calvinistic doctrine of unconditional election.

2. The Arminian theory as stated above implies, that God has *not* decreed the impenitence and unbelief of those who are lost. Hence,

3. The Arminian notion of a conditional election, implies, that the elect have something which they have not received; and that they have made themselves to differ from the reprobates. I should like in this connection, to put a few plain questions to Dr. F.

1. Is regeneration necessary to salvation? 2. Is it the effect of Divine influence? 3. Does God regenerate the elect *intentionally*? 4. When did God form his intentions; in time, or in eternity?

But before I proceed further in the discussion of this subject, it is necessary to correct some mistakes, into which the Dr. has fallen in his explanation of the Calvinistic doctrine of unconditional election. He says, it "relates directly to individuals, without any reference to character." It is not so. The election which Calvinists contend for, relates directly to individuals, **WITH** reference to their characters, as well as their final condition. It fixes and secures their holiness, as well as their salvation. Dr. F. says,

"It is an absolute act of sovereignty."

This is correct. But let it be remembered, that the sovereignty of God is nothing but his wisely directed, and unrestrained goodness. Again,

"God elects them for no other reason or condition, than because He chooses."

It would have been a more correct representation to have said, 'God elects them to holiness and happiness for no other reason, than because it will be for his own glory and the greatest good.'

Again, Dr. F. says,

"He makes no account of man's agency and responsibility, in this decree of election, but it precedes and is entirely independent of any knowledge of the character of the elect."

This is not quite correct. The Divine decree **SECURES** man's agency and responsibility. The latter part of the sentence last quoted, likewise conveys a wrong idea. Election is to be considered in a two-fold view. God has decreed the *character* of the elect, and He has decreed their *salvation*. In the order of nature, He first decreed their character, and thus fore-knew what their character would be; and then He decreed their salvation. His decree of their character did, indeed, precede his fore-knowledge of their

character ; but his decree to save them presupposes, that He decreed and fore-knew what their character would be. Dr. F. says again,

“The Calvinistic election, to be consistent with itself, requires that, as the end is arbitrarily fixed, so the means should be also.”

But neither the end is “ARBITRARILY” fixed, nor the means. *Arbitrarily* means *without reason*. But both the *salvation* of the elect, and the *means* of their salvation were fixed for the highest and best of reasons, and in the wisest and best manner.

I am now ready to examine Dr. F.’s arguments in favor of conditional election.

“Our first argument, in favor of conditional election to eternal life, is drawn from the position already established, that the decrees of God are predicated on his fore-knowledge. And especially, that the decree of election to salvation, according to the Scriptures, is founded on the Divine prescience. “Elect according to the fore-knowledge of God, through sanctification of the spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. Whom he did fore-know, he also did predestinate, to be conformed to the image of his Son.” These scriptures seem to us decisive, that the decree of election rests on fore-knowledge, and that this election is made, not according to the arbitrary act of God, but on the ground of sanctification and obedience. The doctrine, therefore, that men are predestinated to eternal life, “without any fore-sight of faith or good works,” must be false.”

This argument is built on a false principle, which has been already refuted, viz: *That the Divine decrees are founded on the Divine fore-knowledge*. But this principle, though false and absurd, is misapplied in the argument under consideration. The principle asserts, that God *decrees* that a thing shall take place because He *fore-knows* it will. Dr. F. was obliged to take this ground, in order to get rid of the argument derived from the Divine fore-knowledge, in favor of the Divine decrees. No other construction of the principle would *then* answer his purpose. But now the Dr.’s purpose requires a very different construction of the principle which he professes to have established. He does not now represent the decrees of God as founded on his fore-knowledge in such a sense, as to destroy the argument derived from fore-knowledge, in favor of predestination. In the argument now under consideration, he does not mean, that God decrees, that a thing shall take place, because He fore-knows it will. Dr. F. does not mean, that God decrees, the elect shall be saved, because He fore-knows they will be saved. For this would not make the decree of salvation dependent on the

condition of conversion and sanctification. It would only make the decree that a thing shall take place, dependent on the condition of its taking place; which would be perfect nonsense. The principle, therefore, on which Dr. F. professes to found this argument, must in this place mean something else. It means, that God has decreed one thing, because he fore-knew other things. The Dr. means, that God has decreed to save the elect, because He fore-knew that they would be converted and sanctified.

But even the application which Dr. F. makes of this principle, will not answer his purpose. It may be admitted, that God decreed the SALVATION of the elect, SIMPLY CONSIDERED, because He fore-knew their conversion and sanctification. But Dr. F. would gain nothing by this admission. Because the question would still return, How did God fore-know their conversion and sanctification? The answer is, because HE DECREED them. This very fore-knowledge of conversion and sanctification is founded on the Divine decree. Salvation is suspended on the condition of conversion and sanctification; and God has decreed both the end and the means. The end depends upon the means; and God's *decreeing* the *end*, depends upon his *decreeing* the *means*. If the decree which fixes the end, depends upon the fore-knowledge of the means; this very fore-knowledge depends upon the Divine decree as its foundation. So that this is, in effect, only suspending one decree upon another decree. If this were what Dr. F. meant by a *conditional* election, I should have no objection to it. But Dr. F. meant not so, neither did his heart think so.

The texts which Dr. F. has quoted, however, will hardly admit the construction which he has given to them. "Elect according to the fore-knowledge of God, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." Dr. F. understands this passage as teaching, that the saints are elected on account of fore-seen "faith and good works." But the language of the passage renders this construction absurd. The passage teaches, that they are elected "unto obedience." Now how can they be elected unto obedience, upon condition of that very obedience? "Whom He did fore-know, He also did predestinate, to be conformed to the image of his Son." How could they be predestinated to be conformed to the image of Christ, upon condition of that very

conformity? In these passages; the Apostle is not speaking of an election to salvation *simply considered*, but of an election unto holiness, as the condition of salvation. Dr. F.'s first argument, therefore, in favor of what he calls a conditional election, or, an election which does not include conversion and sanctification, is sophistical and unsound in every view which can be taken of it. I will now proceed to Dr. F.'s second argument :

"2. The rewardableness of obedience, or the demerit of disobedience, can only exist, in connection with the unnecessitated volitions of a free moral agent. The scriptures abundantly teach, that to be saved, man must believe and obey ; and hence they command and exhort men to believe and obey, and promise them the reward of eternal life if they do this, and criminate them, if they neglect it. But, according to the doctrine of free-agency already explained, man's obedience or disobedience, if it has any just relation to rewards and punishments, must rest, in its responsible character, upon the self-determining principle of the will. And if this view of the will be correct, there is an *utter impossibility* of an unconditional election. For the very act of God, imparting this self-determining principle to man, renders it impossible, in the nature of things, for the Almighty himself to elect a moral agent, unconditionally. The argument stands thus.—The scriptures make man a responsible moral agent ; but this he cannot be, if his will be controlled by foreign and unavoidable influences—therefore it is not so controlled: that is, man has within himself, a self-determining principle, in the exercise of which, he becomes responsible. This being established, we argue again—The doctrine of unconditional election necessarily implies irresistible grace, absolutely impelling and controlling the will. But this would be to counteract God's own work, and to destroy man's accountability; therefore there is no such irresistible grace, and of course, no such unconditional election. And since there is an election to eternal life, spoken of in the scriptures, it follows conclusively, if the foregoing reasoning be sound, that this election is conditional. Hence we may bring forward, in one overwhelming argument, all the numerous and various bible conditions of salvation, as so many scripture proofs of a conditional election."

This argument is founded on a false assumption, which I have already shown to be unscriptural, absurd and ridiculous. It is this, *that a self-determining principle is necessary to moral agency.*

"The rewardableness of obedience, or the demerit of disobedience, can only exist, in connection with the unnecessitated volitions of a free moral agent."

"*Unnecessitated volitions.*" If our volitions are "*unnecessitated*"; then they arise by chance, to all intents and purposes. To be *unnecessitated*, they must not arise from the necessity of our nature. They must not arise from any *cause* whatever, whether *external* or *internal*, voluntary or involuntary. According to the principle assumed in this argument, our volitions cannot be of a moral nature,

unless they arise altogether by CHANCE. And this theory is inconsistent with all the promises, predictions and doctrines of the Bible.



NUMBER XIII.

I will proceed in the examination of Dr. Fisk's arguments in favor of conditional election.

"3. The cautions to the elect, and the intimations of their danger and the possibility of their being lost, are so many scripture proofs of a conditional election. Why should the saints be exhorted "to take heed lest they fall?" "lest there be in them an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God?" "lest a promise being left of entering into rest, any should come short?" lest *they* should "also be cut off?" Why should St. Paul fear lest, after having preached to others, he should be cast away? Either there is, or is not, danger of the elect's being lost.—If not, then all these passages are not only without meaning, but savor very strongly of deception. They are false colors held out to the elect, for the purposes of alarm and fear, where no fear is.—Will it be said, that possibly some of those addressed, were not of the elect, and were therefore deceiving themselves, and needed to be cautioned and warned? I answer, they had then nothing to fall from, and no promise of which to come short. Besides, to warn such to *stand fast*, seems to imply, that the Holy Spirit cautioned the reprobates against the danger of becoming the elect, which idea, while it intimates a very ungracious work, for the "Spirit of grace" to be engaged in, clearly indicates, that there was danger of breaking the decree of reprobation! We ask again therefore, what do these scriptures mean? Will it be said, as some have argued, that these warnings and cautions are all consistent, because they are the very means by which the decree of election is made sure? But let it be understood, that the end is fixed, before the means; because calvinism tells us, that this election is "independent of any faith or good works foreseen," and that "God's decree lays a necessity on all things, so that every thing he wills, necessarily comes to pass," and is therefore sure, "because he has decreed it." The moment therefore, God decrees an event, it becomes sure, and to talk of danger of a failure in that event, implies either a falsehood, or that God's decree can be *broken*. But calvinists, I presume, will not allow that there is any danger of counteracting or frustrating the plan of the Almighty. Hence there is no danger of the elect's coming short of salvation. All the exhortations, cautions and warnings therefore, recorded in the scriptures, are false colors and deceptive motives. They are like the attempts of some weak parents, who undertake to frighten their children into obedience, by superstitious tales and groundless fears. God knows, when he is giving out these intimations of danger, that there is no such danger; his own eternal, unchangeable decree had secured their salvation, before the means were planed—all this if election is unconditional. But far be this from a God of truth. If he exhorts his creatures to "make their election sure," *he* has not made it

sure. If he teaches them to fear, lest they fail of the grace of God, there is doubtless real danger. The conclusion therefore is irresistible that God hath suspended his decree of election to eternal life, on conditions. "He that believeth shall be saved."

The plausibility of this argument, depends entirely upon the *assumption, that previous infallible certainty precludes the idea of danger*. But this assumption is untenable. It is as inconsistent with Dr. F's scheme as with the *Calvinistic*. Dr. F. maintains, that God fore-knew all things from eternity. Let Dr. F. then answer this simple question; and reconcile his own answer, with his own belief. Is there any danger that events will not take place, which God always fore-knew *certainly* would take place? If previous certainty precludes the idea of danger; then the Divine fore-knowledge precludes the idea of danger. And if so, then there is no such thing as danger in the universe.

The truth is, there is a distinction between *absolute* danger, and *relative* danger; and between danger with respect to God, and danger with respect to his creatures. If an event will *certainly* take place, there is *no* danger *absolutely* speaking, that it will not take place; though there *may* be danger *relatively* speaking. There is no danger with respect to God, but there *may* be danger with respect to his creatures. Danger is the same as *liability* to evil. This liability to evil, is applicable solely to creatures; and is founded in their imperfection.

I will illustrate this idea by a few examples. It was decreed, fore-known and predicted, that Paul and his company should survive the shipwreck, and get safe to land. But yet they were naturally able to flee out of the ship; and considered as they were in themselves, they were *liable* to do so. They were at first inclined to flee out of the ship, at the risk of their lives; and had their preservation depended on their own wisdom, they would certainly have perished. But they were directed by the unerring wisdom and almighty power of God. In respect to God, therefore, there was no danger in their case. But considered as they were in themselves, fallible and imperfect creatures, they were in imminent danger. It was decreed that Moses should be the law-giver and deliverer of the Hebrew nation. With respect to God, therefore, there was no danger of his perishing in the ark of bulrushes. But yet considering him as he was in himself, while in that situation a weak and helpless infant.

he was in imminent danger of a premature death. God had elected David to the throne of Israel. With respect to God, therefore, there was no danger of his perishing by the hand of Saul. But considering him as he was in himself, he was in imminent danger of falling a prey to his vigilant and powerful enemy.

It is just so, with regard to the elect. In respect to God there is no danger of their being lost. But, considered as they are in themselves, fallible and imperfect creatures, they are in imminent danger of losing their own souls. They cannot safely trust to their own hearts, nor lean to their own understandings. If their salvation depended on an arm of flesh, they would perish without remedy. They are surrounded with temptations, and exposed to internal and external enemies; and they must watch and pray, and comply with the warnings and admonitions of the gospel, in order to enter into the kingdom of heaven. And although they will be eventually saved, they will, with respect to themselves, be saved with danger and difficulty; being kept only by the mighty power of God, through faith unto salvation. Dr. F. represents unconditional election as fixing the end before the means. This representation conveys a wrong idea. It implies that the means are unnecessary; and that the end can take place without them. The end is not fixed before the means, in *this* case, any more than in any other. Whenever a plan is formed, the *END* is *proposed* before the *MEANS* are *proposed*; but the *end* is never *FIXED*, till after the *means* are *FIXED*. God did not decree the salvation of the elect independently of their character, as true and persevering believers. On the contrary, the decree of election connects the means and the end inseparably together. Unconditional election, therefore, is so far from making the cautions and warnings of the gospel unnecessary, that it makes a compliance with them absolutely necessary to salvation. The exhortations, cautions' and warnings, therefore recorded in the Scriptures are *not* false colors nor deceptive motives. They imply no more danger in the case of the elect, than there actually is, considering them as they are in themselves.

Dr. F. says,

"If He exhorts his creatures to "make their election sure," *he* has not made it sure."

Now it is readily admitted that God has not made their election sure in **THAT SENSE** in which He exhorts **THEM** to make it sure. Nor does He exhort them to make their election sure, in the same sense, in which *He* has made it sure. *He* has made it sure to *Himself*; and He exhorts *them* to make it sure, to *themselves*. *He* has made it sure by his *eternal decree*; and He exhorts *them* to make it sure by a present compliance with the terms of salvation. It has already been shown that men have a natural power to act contrary to what God decrees, as well as contrary to what He fore-knows. This is the case with the elect. They have a natural, though not a moral power to commit sin unto death. Every saint is *naturally* able to blaspheme against the Holy Ghost. This natural power implies a natural possibility; and a natural possibility creates danger. It does not indeed create any danger with respect to God, but it does with respect to his creatures. The whole argument under consideration, therefore, is founded on a false assumption, and therefore it proves nothing to Dr. F.'s purpose. His argument no more proves that God did not **DECREE** the conversion and sanctification of the elect, than it proves that He did not **FORE-KNOW** their conversion and sanctification.

I will now examine Dr. F.'s fourth argument in favor of conditional election.

"4. This accords also with christian experience. What is it that produces much fear and trembling, in the mind of the awakened sinner? Why does he feel, that there is but a step between him and destruction? Is it fancy, or is it fact? If it is imagination merely, then all his alarm is founded in deception, and he has either deceived himself, or the spirit of God hath deceived him. In either case, this alarm seems necessary, in order to lead him to Christ. That is, it is necessary for the conversion of one of the elect that he be made to believe a lie. But if it be said, that it is no lie for he is really in danger; then we reply again, the decree of God hath not made his election sure, and of course, therefore, it is condition."

This argument depends upon the foregoing: and in answering that, I have virtually answered this. Both this and the preceding argument depend upon the principle, *that previous certainty precludes the idea of danger*. If this argument, therefore, proved any thing to Dr. F.'s purpose, it would prove too much. It could not subvert the doctrine of unconditional election, without subverting the doctrine of the Divine fore-knowledge. And as it proves too

much, it proves nothing at all. I will therefore proceed to Dr. F.'s fifth and last argument.

"5. Express passages of scripture teach a conditional election.—We have time only to notice a few of them. Mat. xxii. 14. "For many are called, but few are chosen." This passage, with the parable of the wedding that precedes it, teaches that the *choice* was made, subsequently to the call, and was grounded on the fact, that those chosen, had actually and fully complied with the invitation, and had come to the wedding duly prepared. John xv. 19. "If ye were of the world, the world would love you, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." This passage teaches that Christ's disciples were once of the world, and that he had chosen them out of the world, and this *choice* evidently refers to that time, when they became of a different character from the world; for then it was, and in consequence of that election, that the world hated them. II. Thes. ii. 13. "Because God hath, from the beginning, *chosen* you to salvation, through sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth." Here is a condition plainly expressed. This is not an election *unto* sanctification, but an election *through* or *by* sanctification and faith unto salvation."

"For many are called, but few are chosen." Dr. F. thinks "that the *choice* was made subsequently to the call, and was grounded on the fact, that those chosen had actually and fully complied with the invitation, and had come to the wedding duly prepared." It is true the choice was *mentioned* after the call; but this by no means proves, that the choice was *made* after the call. The passage asserts no such thing. To make the passage teach this sentiment, Dr. F. must make it appear that the word "*subsequently*" is understood. "Many are called, but few are [subsequently] chosen." Till Dr. F. shall have adduced a better proof than his own assertion, that this word is to be understood; I have as good a right to say, that the word *previously* is to be understood instead of the word *subsequently*. Thus: "Many are called, but few are [previously] chosen." Dr. F. next quotes John 15, 19. "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." Dr. F. says, "this *choice* evidently refers to that time when they become of a different character from the world; for then it was, and in consequence of that election, that the world hated them." But I would ask Dr. F. whether the world would be likely to hate christians more because they were elected in time, than because they were elected from eternity? The construction which Dr. F. puts upon this passage is altogether arbitrary and groundless. It is ho-

liness which distinguishes christians from the world. And to be chosen out of the world is to be chosen unto holiness. The principal reason why the world hate christians, is because God has made christians to differ from the world in the spirit and temper of their minds, according to his eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. Dr. F. next quotes, II. Thes. ii. 13. "Because God hath from the beginning, *chosen* you to salvation through sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth." Dr. F. says, "Here is a condition plainly expressed.—This is not an election *unto* sanctification, but an election *through* or *by* sanctification and faith unto salvation." This passage does not justify the inference which Dr. F. draws from it. It asserts that the elect "are chosen unto salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." The Dr. infers that they cannot be chosen unto sanctification and faith. But is this a just inference? Because God has determined to accomplish the end, *by* or *through means*; does it hence follow that He has not *determined* the *means*? Is it therefore, certain, that He has left the means, and the chosen end depending upon them, to mere *chance*? If the Scriptures teach either expressly or implicitly, that saints were *not* elected to conversion and sanctification, as well as salvation, Dr. F. has not been able as yet to point out those passages.

"From the whole then it appears, that the holy Scriptures, the Divine attributes and government, and the agency of man do [not] stand opposed to an unconditional, and are [not] in favor of a conditional election."



NUMBER XIV.

I have examined Dr. Fisk's arguments in favor of "*conditional* election;" and I am now ready to inquire whether Dr. F. has refuted the arguments, adduced by Calvinists, in favor of *unconditional* election. These arguments Dr. F. represents as consisting merely in certain texts of Scripture, which he arranges into three distinct classes: '1. Those passages which speak of a predestination unto holiness; 2. Those which speak of election as depending solely on the sovereign will of God; 3. Those which declare salvation to be of works and not of grace.'

The first class of texts, which Dr. F. undertakes so examine, "is those which speak of a predestination unto holiness." He mentions his own text as one of the strongest instances of this kind.— "According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before Him in love. Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto himself; according to the good pleasure of his will." Also, Rom. viii, 29; "For whom he did fore-know, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son," "whom did He predestinate—He called—justified—and sanctified." To the argument founded on these and similar texts, in favor of unconditional election, Dr. F. makes the following reply: p. 19:

"But if these passages had an allusion to a personal election to eternal life, they would not prove unconditional election, "because," to use the language of another, "it would admit of being questioned, whether the choosing in Christ, before the foundation of the world here mentioned, was a choice of certain persons *as men merely*, or as *believing men*, which is certainly the most rational." This exposition must necessarily be given to the passage from the Romans, since those who were the subjects of predestination, were first *fore-known*. Fore-known, not merely as existing, for in this sense, *all* were fore-known, but *fore-known*, as possessing something which operated as a reason why *they* should be elected, rather than others. Fore-known doubtless as believers in Christ, and as such according to the plan and decree of God, they were to be made conformable to the image of Christ's holiness here, and glory hereafter."

Here Dr. F. represents the Scripture as teaching, that God has not decreed the *conversion* of the elect; but their *sanctification*.— He thinks, that those passages which speak of a personal election unto holiness, do not mean that the elect are predestinated unto holiness, as *men*, but only as believers. That is to say, 'God has not decreed, that the elect should *become* holy *in* their conversion; but only that they should *continue* holy, *after* their conversion. On Dr. F's. construction of these passages, I would make the following remarks:

1. Dr. F. admits, that the Scriptures speak of a personal election unto *holiness*. He so understands and explains the passage referred to in Rom. viii, 29.

2. Dr. F. contends that this personal election unto holiness means, *that God has predestinated BELIEVERS unto holiness*.

Hence, 3. Dr. F. must, to be consistent, admit the doctrine of the saints perseverance. If God has decreed the holiness of believers; then they will certainly persevere in holiness, and be finally saved. I presume, however, that Dr. F. is no better prepared to admit the doctrine of the saints perseverance, than the doctrine of unconditional election. If God has predestinated believers unto holiness, then they have no self-determining principle of choice. And if there is no self-determining principle in the human will; then they are necessarily dependent on the will of God, for all their exercises: and the truth of unconditional election follows irresistibly. Here then is a dilemma. Those passages “which speak of a personal election unto holiness,” according to the *Calvinistic* construction, teach the doctrine of unconditional election *directly*; but according to the *Arminian* construction these passages refer to believers, and teach the doctrine of saints *perseverance* DIRECTLY and the doctrine of *unconditional election* INDIRECTLY and by necessary inference. For the present Dr. F. may take which horn of the dilemma he chooses.

Dr. F. thinks “This exposition must necessarily be given to the passage from Romans, since those who were the subjects of predestination, were first fore-known. Fore-known not merely as existing, for in this sense *all* were fore-known, but *fore-known*, as possessing something which operated as a reason why *they* should be elected rather than others. Fore-known doubtless as believers in Christ, and as such, according to the plan and decree of God, they were to be made conformable to the image of Christ’s holiness here, and glory hereafter.” But why may they not be fore-known as those whom it was for the best, all things considered, to predestinate to be conformed to the image of Christ? Is it reasonable to suppose, that the elect were predestinated to be conformed to the image of Christ upon condition of their conformity? But whether this construction be reasonable or unreasonable, it will not help Dr. F. out of his dilemma.

When Dr. F. comes to explain his own text, he says, he does not understand it as referring to a personal election, but to “that general plan of God which had been fixed from the beginning, of admitting the gentiles as well as the Jews to the privileges of the covenant of grace, on equal terms and conditions.” Let us then, to

please Dr. F. read his text according to his own construction : "According as He hath chosen us [gentiles as well as Jews ; believers and unbelievers] in Him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love. Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ, to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." Is not this precisely the construction which Universalists would put upon this passage ?

Dr. F.'s exposition of this passage, however, does not at all affect the argument founded on that class of passages, which, it is *admitted* on all sides, speak of a personal election unto holiness. For if these passages refer to the elect *before* their conversion they teach the doctrine of unconditional election *directly* ; and if they refer to the elect, as Arminians contend, *after* their conversion, then, as it has been shown, they teach the doctrine of unconditional election *indirectly* ; by establishing the saints perseverance.

But it is possible that Dr. F. will think it expedient hereafter, to explain *all* those passages which speak of a predestination unto holiness, as referring to nations and communities. Perhaps he will say, that these passages teach only, that certain nations and communities are unconditionally elected unto the peculiar privileges of the gospel. But, although it would be wresting the scriptures from their most plain and obvious meaning, to give such a construction to all those passages, yet it would be of no real advantage to the Arminian cause. For an unconditional election of *nations* and *communities* to the privileges of the gospel, *implies* an unconditional election of *individuals* to the same privileges. An unconditional election of nations and communities to the means of salvation, *includes* also an unconditional election of some individuals to eternal life. It is absurd to suppose, that God would have appointed the means of salvation, if it were not his intention to render them effectual to the conversion and salvation of some sinners. Indeed, the unconditional election of *a part* of mankind to the means of salvation, evidently implies the unconditional reprobation of the rest, to whom these means are not sent. Every objection which can be brought against unconditional election, lies equally against that plan of divine government, which sends the gospel to some and withholds it from others. For ought Dr. F. has said, therefore, that

class of passages which speak of predestination unto holiness, must remain in their full force, in favor of the doctrine of unconditional election.

The second class of passages which Dr. F. undertakes to examine, is those which speak of election as depending on the sovereign will of God alone. Dr. F. thinks the ninth chapter of Romans is the strongest portion of Scripture, on this subject; and he undertakes to show, that this refers only to a national election to the privileges of the gospel. But—suppose it does; it is still in point. For this chapter proves beyond a doubt, that the *means of salvation* depend on the sovereign will of God; and that it depends entirely upon his sovereign will, to whom these means shall be sent, and to whom they shall not be sent. It depends, likewise, on the sovereign will of God, whether the gospel itself, shall prove a savor of life unto life, or of death unto death. For our Savior says, “No man can come unto me except the Father who hath sent me, draw him.” God says, “A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.”—“Of his own will begat he us, by the word of truth.”—“Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”—“So then, neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase.” We have therefore, the most decisive evidence from Scripture, that both the *means* of salvation, and their *efficacy* depend on the sovereign will of God. Dr. F.’s attempt to explain away the ninth chapter of Romans will avail nothing to his purpose, unless he can show, that the Scriptures no where represent the conversion and sanctification of the elect, as depending on the Divine will. And this, I presume the Dr. will not undertake to do. But if he will admit that regeneration and sanctification are the work of God; and, that whatever God does, he does *intentionally*, then, to be consistent, he must admit, that God has decreed their conversion and sanctification, as well as their salvation.

I do not mean, however to be understood to admit, that the ninth of Romans contains nothing in reference to personal election; especially in the following passages: “So then it is not of him that willeth nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. Therefore, hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.” But the argument founded on the second

class of texts which Dr. F. undertakes to examine does not depend at all on his exposition of the ninth of Romans, so long as it is admitted on all sides, that regeneration and sanctification are the work of God, and depend entirely upon his will.

The third class of passages, which Dr. Fisk undertakes to examine, is "Those which declare salvation to be of grace and not of works." Dr. F. quotes several passages of this description, and fully admits, that salvation is of grace, from beginning to end. He very justly observes that, "*There was nothing in all the character and circumstances of the fallen family, except their sin and deserved misery, that could claim the interposition of God's saving power.*" But Dr. F. asks, "*Cannot a conditional election be of grace?*" Answer.—It cannot be in *all* respects of grace, unless *grace* cause the condition to be fulfilled. Again he asks, "Now if salvation is conditional, and yet of grace, why not election?" Answer.—Salvation, though conditional is entirely of grace, because grace causes the condition itself to be fulfilled. And if Arminians meant no more than this by conditional election, Calvinists would not dispute them on this point. If by conditional election, Arminians meant merely, that salvation is suspended on conversion and sanctification in that eternal purpose which secures both the end and the means, I freely admit, that it is all of grace. But they are not understood to mean this. The *conditional election*, they contend for, suspends the end upon the means, but leaves the means to contingency or chance. It suspends salvation upon conversion and sanctification, but leaves conversion and sanctification to sinners themselves. It is easy to see, that such an election as this is not of grace so far as it respects *conversion* and *sanctification*. All those passages, therefore, which speak of conversion and sanctification as produced by the grace of God, clearly imply, that they are dependent entirely upon his will, and are fore-ordained. But we will let Dr. F. speak for himself:

"But that our doctrine of election is of grace, will appear evident I think, from the following considerations: 1. It was pure unmerited love, that moved God to provide salvation for our world. 2. The gospel plan, therefore, with all its *provisions* and *conditions*, is of grace. Not a step in that whole system, but rests in grace, is presented by grace and is executed through grace. 3. Even the power of the will to choose life and the conditions of life, is a *gracious power*. A fallen man, without grace, could no more choose to submit to God, than a fallen angel. Herein we

differ widely from the Calvinists. They tell us man has a *natural* power to choose life. If so, he has power to get to Heaven, without grace! We say, on the contrary, that man is utterly unable to choose the way to Heaven, or to pursue it when chosen, without the grace of God. It is grace that enlightens and convinces the sinner, and strengthens him to seek after and obtain salvation, for "without Christ we *can do nothing*." Let the candid judge between us then, and decide which system most robs our precious Redeemer of his glory, that which gives him a *native* and *inherent* power to get to Heaven of himself, or that which attributes all to grace. 4. Finally, when the sinner repents and believes, there is no merit in these acts to procure forgiveness and regeneration, and therefore, though he is *now* and *on these conditions* elected, and made an heir of salvation, yet it is for Christ's sake, and, "not for works of righteousness which he has done." Thus, we "bring forth the top stone with shouting, crying *grace, grace*, unto it."

It does not appear from the above paragraph, that *regeneration* and *sanctification*, on Dr. F.'s ground, depend, at all, on the grace of God. For if they depend upon his grace, they must depend upon his sovereign will. And to say that they depend upon his sovereign will, implies that they are fore-ordained.

Dr. F. represents the saint us 'elected on account of fore-seen faith and good works.' And yet he expressly says, in the above paragraph, that it is "not for works of righteousness which he has done." Will the Dr. have the goodness to explain his meaning?

Dr. F. says, ¶ "Even the power of the will to choose life, and the conditions of life, is a gracious power." ¶ Now this "gracious power" according to Dr. F.'s own explanation is nothing more nor less than "a self-determining principle in the will." This self-determining principle in the will, Dr. F. represents as essential to a moral agent. Hence it follows, that *grace* is the sole ground of moral agency.

Without this self-determining principle, according to Dr. F. men are incapable of sinning. And if this is a "gracious power," then grace is necessary to enable them to sin. If they become holy by grace, merely because they exercise a "gracious power," then they sin by grace for the same reason.

If this self-determining principle is necessary to our moral agency, it was necessary to the moral agency of Adam, before he sinned. And if this is a gracious power, then Adam was a subject of grace, before he fell.

The holy angels are moral agents as much as men. And if they possess a self-determining principle, and this is a "gracious power";

then the angels in heaven are indebted to the grace of God for their moral character.

The devil is a moral agent ; for “ The devil sinneth from the beginning.” If a self-determining principle, therefore, be necessary to a moral agency and this be “ a gracious power” ; then Satan himself is a subject of grace. Such are a few of the beauties of Arminianism. But Dr. F. says,

“ Herein we differ widely from the Calvinists.”

And so be it.

“ They tell us man has a *natural* power to choose life. If so, he has power to get to heaven without grace.

But how so ? This *natural* power neither renders men *guiltless* nor *independent*. Their salvation depends entirely upon the *renewing* and *pardoning*, grace of God. Their natural power, therefore, neither enables them to get to heaven *independently* of God, nor without his *grace*.



NUMBER XV.

I am now ready to examine Dr. Fisk's objections against unconditional election.

Obj. “ 1. The doctrine of the unconditional election of a part, necessarily implies the unconditional reprobation of the rest.”

Answer. If unconditional reprobation means, that God has decreed the character as well as the destination of the finally impenitent ; it is freely admitted, that this doctrine is implied in the doctrine of unconditional election. If ‘ God has mercy on whom he will have mercy ; it undoubtedly follows, that whom He will, He hardeneth.’

Obj. “ 2. This doctrine of election, while it professes to vindicate free grace and the mercy of God, destroys them altogether. To the reprobates, there is certainly no grace or mercy extended. Their very existence, connected as it necessarily is, with eternal damnation, is an infinite curse. The temporal blessings which they enjoy, the insincere offers that are held out to them, and the gospel privileges with which they are mocked, if they can be termed grace at all, must be called *damning grace*. For all this is only fattening them for the slaughter, and fitting them to suffer, to a more aggravated extent, the unavoidable pains and torments that await them. Hence Calvin's sentiment, that “ God calls to the reprobates, that they may be more deaf—kindles a light that they may be more blind—brings his doctrine to them, that they may be

more ignorant—and applies the remedy to them, that they may not be healed,” is an honest avowal of the legitimate principles of this system. Surely then, no one will pretend, that, according to this doctrine, there is any grace for the reprobate. And perhaps a moment’s attention will show, that there is little or none for the elect. It is said, that God, out of his mere sovereignty, without any thing in the creature to move him thereto, elects sinners to everlasting life. But if there is nothing in the creature to move him thereto, how can it be called *mercy* or *compassion*? He did not determine to elect them, because they were miserable, but because he pleased to elect them. If misery had been the exciting cause, then as all were equally miserable, he would have elected them all. Is such a degree of election founded in love to the suffering object? No: *it is the result of the most absolute and omnipotent selfishness conceivable.* It is the exhibition of a character that sports most sovereignly and arbitrarily, with his Almighty power, *to create, to damn and to save.*

Answer. This objection is founded on the assumption, *That the decrees of God destroy the moral agency and blameworthiness of sinners, and make God an arbitrary being, whose supreme regard for his own glory, destroys all his compassion for the miseries of his creatures.* I have already shown, that this assumption is not true. The decrees of God do not destroy, but secure the moral agency of his creatures. Nor does his supreme regard for his own glory imply that He has no regard for their miseries. On the contrary, He regards their miseries exactly according to their nature and importance. His tender mercies are over all his creatures, notwithstanding He has a *supreme* regard for his own glory and the good of the universe, in all his designs and conduct. No consistent Calvinist will say, that the miseries of creatures do not move the Divine compassion, but, only that their good is not the *supreme* end of the Divine government.

Grace is the exercise of love to the guilty; and *mercy* is the exercise of love to the miserable. If the doctrine of election destroys the free grace and mercy of God, it must do this in one of two ways: it must either destroy the guilt and misery of creatures, or it must destroy the exercise of Divine love to the guilty and miserable. But it does neither the one nor the other. Notwithstanding the decree of unconditional election, mankind are in a guilty and perishing condition. And this eternal decree is the exercise of eternal love to guilty and perishing creatures. It is, therefore, both free, distinguishing grace, and sovereign, distinguishing mercy.

An atonement is provided for all mankind; and all are naturally able to comply with the terms of Divine acceptance. In it *self-con-*

sidered, God sincerely desires the salvation of the reprobates : and He expresses this sincere desire in offering them pardon and eternal life, on terms with which they are *naturally able* to comply. These offers are *sincere*, because they express what God sincerely desires. Both saving grace and mercy therefore, are sincerely offered to the reprobates ; and nothing hinders their salvation, but their own unwillingness to accept the offered grace and mercy.

Dr. F. gives the following representation of unconditional election : ‘ *He did not determine to elect them because they were miserable, but because He pleased to elect them. If misery had been the exciting cause, then as all were equally miserable, he would have elected them all.*’ This representation is not quite correct. It would be more correct to say, ‘ *God did not elect them [MERELY] because they were miserable, but because He saw it to be wisest and best. If misery had been the [ONLY] exciting cause, then as all were equally miserable, He would have elected them all.*’ This representation would have been just, but not suitable to Dr. F’s. purpose. Had he represented the thing as it is, there would have been no propriety in the following question : “ *Is such a decree of election founded in love to the suffering object ?* ” In this case he could have only asked, “ *Is such a decree of election founded [ENTIRELY] in love to the suffering object ?* ” It was founded not *only* in love to the suffering object, but also in a *supreme regard* for his own glory, and the highest and best interests of the universe. “ *God is love.* ” He regards all objects and interests in the universe, exactly according to their nature and importance, both *individually* and *collectively* considered. This is disinterested, impartial, universal love, and is the foundation of the purposes of God, in general, and of the decree of unconditional election in particular. And yet Dr. F. ventures to say of unconditional election, “ *It is the result of the most absolute and omnipotent selfishness conceivable.* ” !!! “ *It is the exhibition of a character which sports most sovereignly and arbitrarily, with his Almighty power, to create, to damn, and to save.* ” !!!!! I am glad that Dr. F. is unwilling, that selfishness should reign. On reflection, then, will not Dr. F. rejoice that selfishness is not “ *omnipotent ;* ” and that it will never be able either to destroy or defeat the purposes of impartial, universal and infinite benevolence ?

Obj. "3. The doctrine we oppose, makes God partial and a respecter of persons; contrary to express and repeated declarations of Scripture. For it represents God as determining to save some, and damn others, without reference to their characters, all being precisely in the same state. To deny this, is to acknowledge, that the decree of election and reprobation had respect to character, which is to give up the doctrine."

Answer. How can it be said, with truth, that election has no reference to character, when it *fixes* the character of the elect, as necessary to their salvation? And how can it be said, with truth that reprobation has no reference to character, when it *fixes* the character of the reprobates, as necessary to their damnation?

Dr. F. himself holds, that God has unconditionally elected some nations and communities, in distinction from others, to the means of salvation. If Dr. F. will show how God could do this, without being partial and a respecter of persons, he will doubtless be able to reconcile the impartiality of God with the doctrine of unconditional and personal election to eternal life.

The truth is, partiality does not consist merely in *making a difference*; but in making a difference *without any good reason*. God has the highest and best of reasons, for making the elect to differ from the reprobates, both in time and eternity. These reasons are his own glory and the greatest good of the universe. He does not make this difference between the elect and the reprobates, because He has a partial regard for the elect, and no regard for the reprobates; but because his own glory, and the greatest good of the universe require. It is not partiality, therefore, which leads him to make this difference among his creatures, but a pure, impartial regard for his own glory, and the highest and best interests of the universe.

Obj. "4. This doctrine is objectionable, because, contrary to express, and repeated passages of Scripture, it necessarily limits the atonement. To say nothing now of the utter uselessness of making an atonement for the reprobates, unless for the purpose of making their unavoidable damnation more aggravated, we would ask, what is the object of the atonement? Let these very Calvinists answer. They tell us, that its object was, to open the way, by which it might be possible for sinners to be saved. But has the atonement made it possible for the reprobates to be saved? If so, then perhaps they will be saved, and therefore the idea of unconditional election and reprobation is false. But if the atonement has only made it possible for the elect to be saved, then it was made only for the elect. Let the supporters of this system choose which horn of this dilemma they please; either will destroy their doctrine. For as it is absurd to talk about redeeming grace and gospel provisions, *sufficient* to save those who are eternally and effectually excluded from these blessings, so it is idle to talk about a redemption for *all*, which includes pro-

visions sufficient only to save the *elect*. Not even the fiction of a *natural ability* in all men to serve God and get to Heaven, will help this difficulty. For allowing, in the argument, that the reprobates have ability to serve God and gain Heaven, without grace and in spite of God's decree, still, as this is called a *natural ability* it is plain, it is not the fruit of the atonement. It is equally irrelevant to argue, that the atonement may be said to be universal, because it contains enough to save the whole world, if they would or could embrace it, and it is only their excessive depravity which renders it impossible for them to receive the atonement. For this is the same as to say that a physician has an efficient remedy to heal his patient, only he is so sick he cannot take it. This excessive weakness is that for which the physician should prescribe, and to which the medicine should be applied. And if it does not come to this, it is no medicine for this case. So the atonement, if it is not a remedy for man's extreme depravity, is no provision for him. If it does not give a gracious power to all sinners to embrace salvation, it has accomplished nothing for the depraved reprobate. Since therefore, according to Calvinism, the atonement provides for the reprobate, neither natural nor moral ability to serve God, nor makes it possible for him to be saved, it follows, that the atonement is made only for the elect. But as this is contrary to the word of God, the doctrine that leads to this conclusion, must be false.

Answer. The atonement does not literally pay a debt, nor literally take away the guilt and ill-desert of sinners. If it literally paid their debt, or took away their ill-desert, it would destroy their need of pardoning mercy, and render the forgiving grace of the gospel a mere farce. The atonement was not intended to destroy our need of forgiveness, but to lay a foundation for it. It was not intended to render the exercise of God's pardoning grace impossible; but only to render it possible, and consistent with his justice to himself, and to his kingdom. The atonement of Christ does not oblige God in justice to have mercy on a single soul. It consisted in displaying God's regard to his law, and his hatred of sin, as fully as they could have been displayed in the condign punishment of sinners themselves; so that justice and mercy may meet each other, in the salvation of believers. The atonement therefore, could not be sufficient for the elect, without being sufficient for all mankind. It could not lay a foundation for mercy to a single soul, without laying such a foundation, as would enable God, consistently with his justice, to 'have mercy on whom He will have mercy.' A universal atonement therefore, is not only consistent with particular election, but absolutely necessary to it. For if the atonement had not been sufficient for *all*, it could not have been sufficient for *one*; and, in this case, not a single soul could have been elected to eternal life.

“But, says Dr. F., has the atonement made it possible for the reprobates to be saved? If so, then perhaps they will be saved, and the idea of unconditional electional and reprobation is false.”

This argument is founded on the assumption, that a natural possibility of salvation is inconsistent with a previous certainty of damnation. If it proves any thing, therefore, it proves too much. If it disproves unconditional election, it disproves Divine fore-knowledge. Thus it might be asked, *‘Has the atonement made it possible for those to be saved, who God fore-knew would be lost? If so, then perhaps they will be saved, and therefore the idea of Divine fore-knowledge is false.’* The argument is just as conclusive in the one case, as in the other. The truth is, it is not conclusive in either case. A natural possibility, that an event should take place, is perfectly consistent with its being fore-known, decreed and infallibly certain, that it should not take place. It was fore-known, decreed and infallibly certain, that Christ should die; and yet it was naturally possible for him to deliver himself from death. It was fore-known, decreed and infallibly certain, that Paul and his company would survive the shipwreck and get safe to land. And yet it was naturally possible for them to plunge themselves into the deep, and put an end to their own lives. Just so, the atonement renders it naturally possible for the reprobates to be saved, notwithstanding it is infallibly certain that they will reject the atonement provided, and be lost.

The Dr. calls the natural ability of sinners to do their duty, a ‘fiction,’ and says, it avails nothing, in as much as it is not the fruit of the atonement. But, because the natural ability of sinners to comply with the terms of salvation is not the fruit of the atonement, does it hence follow, that no atonement is made for them to render their salvation possible on their complying with those terms?

But Dr. F. says, “the atonement, if it is not a remedy for man’s extreme depravity, is no provision for him.”

So argues the Universalist. And if you admit his premises, his conclusion is irresistible, *that all mankind will be saved.* For if the atonement be made for all mankind, and is not only a foundation for pardon, but a remedy for their depravity, they will certainly be saved.

But in the following sentence, Dr. F. doubtless intends to explain, what he means by “a remedy for their extreme depravity:” *“If it does not give a gracious power to all sinners to embrace salva-*

tion, it has accomplished nothing for the depraved reprobate." By this "*gracious power*" the Dr. means a self-determining principle in the will; which according to his theory *all moral agents* must possess, whether saints or sinners, angels or devils. If it is possessed by an order of beings for whom no atonement has been made, why is it called "*gracious power*," and "*fruit of the atonement*?" I have already shown, that this self-determining principle is "*a fiction*;" but if it were a *reality*, it would be no *remedy* for the extreme depravity of sinners. If sinners possessed a self-determining principle, it would do them no good; for so long as they retained their depraved hearts, they would always use it wrong.

The truth is, there are two obstacles in the way of the salvation of the sinner, which require two distinct remedies. One of these consists in his hell-desert, and the other, in the reigning depravity of his heart. The first can be remedied only by the atonement of Christ, and the second, only by the renewing and sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit. The atonement lays a foundation for pardon: and the Holy Spirit renews and sanctifies the heart. The atonement extends to all mankind; but the renewing and sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit, only to the elect.

Obj. "5. If time would permit, I might here notice, at some length, several objections to this doctrine—Such as that it takes away all motives to repentance, by giving the sinner just cause to say—"If I am to be saved, I shall be, do what I may; and if I am to be damned, I must be, do what I can"—It leads to the idea of infant damnation—It weakens the zeal and paralyzes the efforts of devotion and benevolence—It destroys the end of punishment, the original design of which was to prevent sin—but which, according to this doctrine, was designed merely for the glory of God; and sin was ordained, for the purpose of giving God an opportunity of glorifying himself, in punishing it. These and others might be dwelt upon with effect—But passing them all, I hasten to the conclusion of my arguments, by urging only one more objection to the system I am opposing."

Answer. "If time would permit" I could easily show, that the doctrine of election gives the sinner no more cause than the Divine fore-knowledge to say, "If I am to be saved, I shall be, do what I may; and if I am to be damned, I shall be, do what I can; and that he has no more reason to say this, than to say, "If I am to live, I shall live, though I starve myself to death; and if I am to commit suicide, I certainly shall, though I never commit the fatal deed." "If time would permit" I could easily show, that the doctrine of

election no more “leads to infant damnation” than the Divine foreknowledge—That the doctrine of election awakens “the zeal” and encourages “the efforts of devotion and benevolence”—That it confirms “the end of punishment, the original design of which was [not only] to prevent sin,” but to promote the glory of God; and that sin was ordained not merely for the purpose of giving God an opportunity to glorify his justice in its punishment, but also to glorify his grace in the scheme of redemption through Christ. ‘These and other remarks might be dwelt upon with effect.’ But passing them all, I hasten to consider Dr. F’s. last objection to the Calvinistic system.

Obj. “6. We are suspicious of this doctrine, because its advocates themselves, seem studious to cover up and keep out of sight, many of its features, and are constantly changing their manner of stating and defending their system. A little attention to the history of the controversy, between predestinarians and their opposers, will show the truth and force of this objection. The charge that Calvinism covers up and keeps out of sight, some of its most offensive features, does not lie so much against its advocates of the old school, as those of the modern. With the exception of some logical consequences, which we think chargeable upon the system, and which they were unwilling to allow, these early defenders of unconditional election, came out boldly and fearlessly, with their doctrine.”

Answer. There is a good deal of weight in this objection. But it does not disprove the doctrine of unconditional election. It only proves that modern Calvinists are dishonest.

The Calvinistic doctrines have, of late, been grossly misstated, misrepresented and concealed by a set of men, calling themselves Calvinists, but who are, in reality, nearer Arminians than any thing else. The following remarks of Dr. F. are, with some slight exceptions, just.

“In perfect accordance with the foregoing, is the common explanation that is given, to the doctrine of election and reprobation. Reprobation is kept out of sight; and yet it is as heartily believed by modern Calvinists as it was by John Calvin himself. It is taught too; but it is taught covertly. And yet when we quote old fashioned Calvinism in its primitive plain dress, we are told *these are old authors*—we do not believe with them—“if we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in *their errors*,” and yet “they are witnesses unto themselves, that they *are the children* of them” who taught these errors. They recommend their writings, they garnish their sepulchres, they teach their catechisms to the rising generation—they say even in their church articles of faith—“We believe in the doctrines of grace, as held and taught by the *fathers* and *reformers*, in the church,”—and especially do they hold to that root and foundation of the whole system, “God hath from all eternity, fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass.”

"Since I have alluded to church articles, it will be in support of this objection to say, that the written creeds of churches, partake of this same ambiguous character. They are either expressed in texts of scripture, or in doubtful and obscure terms, so that different constructions can be put upon them, according to the faith of the subscriber. And instances have been known, in which articles of faith have been altered, again and again, to accommodate scrupulous candidates. And yet their candidates for holy orders, and for professorships, in their theological institutions, are required to subscribe to a rigid calvinistic creed. In this way, it is expected doubtless, that the doctrine will be maintained and perpetuated, though, in other respects public opinion should be accommodated. How would honest John Calvin, if he could be introduced among us, with the same sentiments he had, when on earth, frown upon the churches, which bear his name. He would not only call them "silly and childish," but he would doubtless, in his bold, blunt manner, charge them with disingenuousness and cowardice, if not with downright duplicity, for thus shunning and smoothing over and covering up the more repulsive features of their system. How would he chide them, for shifting their ground, and changing their system, while they nevertheless pretend to build on the same foundation of predestination."

I sincerely hope this reproof will be felt by all whom it may concern.



NUMBER XVI.

I have now examined Dr. Fisk's arguments in favor of conditional, and his objections against unconditional election. In this number, I intend to adduce several direct arguments in favor of the doctrine in question.

1. One argument in favor of unconditional election is founded on the doctrine of depravity. Mankind by nature, are dead in trespasses and sins. They have that 'carnal mind which is enmity against God, not subject to his law, neither indeed can be.' "The heart of the sons of men is full of evil." "There is none [by nature] that seeketh after God." "The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination to the Lord." "The thoughts of the wicked are abomination to the Lord." "The way of the wicked is abomination to the Lord." They all turn away their ear from hearing the law of love: and "he that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination." The very "ploughing of the wicked is sin." 'Their heart is desperately wicked, and fully set in them to do evil.'

The entire depravity of sinners, makes their salvation entirely dependent on the sovereign grace of God. They never will comply with the terms of Divine acceptance, unless God is pleased, of his own sovereign goodness, to bow their stubborn wills. As all are by nature children of disobedience, not a single sinner could be saved, unless he were elected to new and holy obedience. And as

the elect are chosen to obedience as well as salvation, it is plain, that their election is unconditional.

2. Another argument in favor of unconditional election, is founded on the doctrine of regeneration. This argument, though involved in the preceding, deserves to be distinctly considered. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." The saints "are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." It is He that '*quickens* them who were dead in trespasses and sins.' It is He that '*creates* them in Christ Jesus, unto love and good works.' 'Love is the fruit of his spirit.' 'He gives them repentance, to the acknowledging of the truth'; and 'faith is the gift of God.' Conversion and sanctification, therefore, are exclusively the work of God. And if they are the work of God, then they depend upon his will. And if they depend on his will, then they are fore-ordained. God has, therefore, willed or determined the conversion and sanctification of the elect, as well as their salvation.

But regeneration is unconditional. To suppose, that the sinner is regenerated upon any conditions performed by him, is extremely absurd. If there be any conditions of regeneration to be performed by the sinner, what are they? Are they regenerated on condition of love to God? Love is the very *essence* of regeneration. Are they regenerated on condition of repentance? Repentance *implies* regeneration. Are they regenerated on condition of faith? Faith also implies regeneration. Are they regenerated on condition of prayer? Acceptable prayer likewise implies a heart already regenerated. Are they regenerated on condition of any holy performances? To suppose this, is to suppose that they are regenerated on condition of their regeneration. For every holy, acceptable performance implies that the heart is already regenerated. But if they are not regenerated on condition of any previous holy performances, on what condition are they regenerated? Is it on condition of any *unholy* performances? To say that God regenerates sinners, on account of their unholy performances is to impeach the Divine character. Who will venture to assert, that unholy and sinful performances are acceptable in the sight of Him who cannot look upon iniquity? Will it be said, then, that sinners are regenerated upon condition of such performances as are neither holy nor sinful? If so, what are those performances? And what can there be in performances which are neither holy nor sinful, to render them pleasing to God, and constitute them a condition of his renewing grace? To make regeneration conditional, is the grossest absurdity. Regeneration, therefore, is unconditional. And if regeneration is unconditional; then election is unconditional.

3. Another argument in favor of unconditional election to eternal life is founded on the doctrine of the saints' perseverance. It is written: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they

follow me : And I give unto them eternal life ; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all ; and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good ; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me. The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord ; and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not utterly be cast down ; for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand. To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time. Being confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called ; and whom he called, them he also justified ; and whom he justified, them he also glorified. For I am persuaded, that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

It appears from Scripture, then, that the saints will persevere in obedience until death. And their perseverance depends not upon any self-determining principle in their hearts, but upon *promised, sanctifying grace*. And if they are preserved, as saints, by the sanctifying grace of God ; then they are entirely *dependent* upon it, for sanctification. And if they are dependent for sanctification ; then they were likewise dependent for their conversion, upon the Divine will. The doctrine of the saints' perseverance, as it is taught in the Scriptures, therefore, demonstrates the absolute and entire dependence of the saints upon the Divine will, for all their holy exercises. And their entire dependence upon God, for every thing that is holy and acceptable to him, demonstrates, that their election is unconditional.

4. The doctrine of unconditional election may be argued from the atonement of Christ. It is unreasonable to suppose that God the Father would have given up his only and well-beloved Son to die the just, for the unjust, without securing to him the reward of his obedience unto death. Accordingly we are informed, that God has given his son a seed to serve him ; that Christ shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied ; and that his people shall be willing in the day of his power. Christ said himself, " All that the Father hath given me, shall come to me ; and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out : but will raise him up at the last day."

Christ would not have been *sure* of his reward, had the conversion of sinners and the sanctification of saints been left to a ' self-determining principle of the human will.' Indeed Christ would

have been sure of *losing* his reward, had the conversion and sanctification of the elect, been left to their own sinful hearts. It is just as certain, therefore, that God has determined the conversion and sanctification of the elect, as it is, that he has *secured* to his Son the *promised reward of his obedience unto death*.

5. The doctrine of personal and unconditional election to eternal life, may be inferred from the unconditional appointment and distribution of the means to salvation. God has appointed the means of salvation, and He sends them wherever He pleases. He sends the preached gospel to some nations and communities, families and individuals, and not to others. In this He must have some design. He certainly does more for some, than for others, so far as it respects the means of salvation. These means in multitudes of instances, become effectual to the conversion and salvation of sinners; while those to whom these means are not sent, are generally lost. It is written, "The dark places of the earth, are full of the habitations of cruelty"; and 'where no vision is, the people perish.'

When these means become effectual in the hand of God to the conversion and sanctification of men, it is absurd to suppose, that they do not produce the effect which God intended they should produce. It is absurd to suppose, that He has ever appointed and used them in vain. And it is no less unscriptural than absurd. He has expressly said that 'his word shall not return unto him void, that it shall accomplish that which He pleases, and prosper in the thing whereto he sends it.'

The efficacy of the means which God uses with sinners, depends entirely upon his influence. Paul may plant and Apollos water; but God giveth the increase. "So then, neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." The conversion and sanctification of sinners, therefore, necessarily depends upon the will of God.

Since God has provided the means of salvation at infinite expense; it is absurd to suppose, that He has provided them without determining their result. They are distributed and used in infinite wisdom; and it is absurd to suppose that they are distributed and used without design. They sometimes prove a savor of life unto life, and sometimes a savor of death unto death; and it is absurd to suppose that infinite Wisdom and Benevolence would leave such infinitely important results to chance and contingency. They cannot become effectual to conversion and sanctification in a single instance, without his agency; and it is absurd to suppose, that God ever accompanies these means with the awakening, renewing, sanctifying and saving influence of his Spirit, without previously *intending* to do this. And if He previously intended to effect their conversion and sanctification; then He always had that intention. For, since He is unchangeable, He has not formed his intentions in time, but in eternity.

6. Another argument in favor of unconditional election, is founded on the goodness of God. His goodness is absolutely perfect, unchangeable, and eternal. He cannot, therefore, be indifferent to the holiness and happiness of any of his creatures. He is morally obliged to choose in itself considered, whatever is desirable in itself considered; and to choose all things considered, whatever is desirable all things considered. Now the conversion and sanctification of the elect, are desirable both in themselves considered, and all things considered. This will be admitted on all sides. The goodness of God, therefore, must necessarily dispose him to choose their conversion and sanctification both in themselves considered and all things considered, and his *unchangeable* and *eternal* goodness must have disposed him to do this from all eternity. But to say, that God, from eternity did, all things considered, *choose* the conversion and sanctification of the elect, as well as their salvation, is all that is meant by the doctrine of unconditional and personal election to eternal life. And we have just as much evidence, that such was the choice of God from eternity, as we have, that his goodness is infinite, unchangeable and eternal.

7. There is evidence in favor of the doctrine of unconditional and personal election to eternal life, in the ultimate end of the Divine operations. *This end is the fullest exercise, expression, result and gratification of the goodness of God in all its branches.* This end could be perfectly attained, only in the scheme of redemption. It is only in this scheme that He can possibly exercise, display and gratify his grace and justice consistently with each other. And in this scheme, He exercises, displays and gratifies all his perfections more fully than He could have done in any other way. He has concentrated all his glory in the face of Jesus Christ. Christ is the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his person. Accordingly the scheme of redemption through Christ is represented in Scripture, as comprising all the designs and operations of Jehovah. "Who created all things by Jesus Christ, to the intent, that now unto principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to his eternal purpose which he purposed in Jesus Christ our Lord." The accomplishment of this scheme requires the conversion, sanctification and salvation of the elect through Jesus Christ.

It is absurd to suppose, that God fixed the end from eternity without fixing the means. That He devised the scheme of redemption, without securing its accomplishment. That, after creating the heavens and earth for this glorious purpose, and laying the foundation for its accomplishment in the blood of his well beloved Son, He should after all, suspend the great end of all his designs and sacrifices and exertions, on the contingency of a self-determining principle of human depravity. Is not God morally bound by a

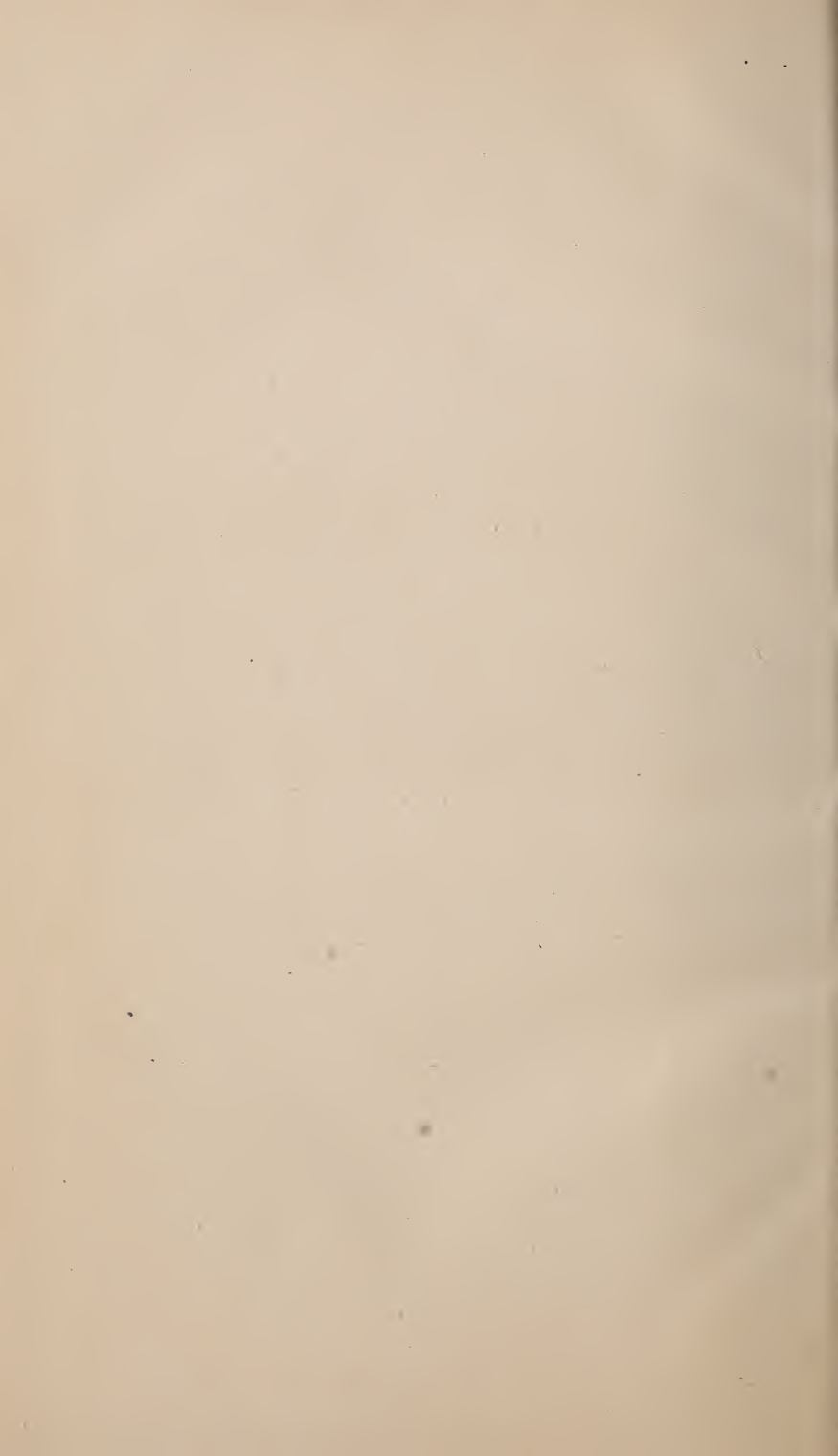
regard for himself to *secure* the infallible accomplishment of the great end of all his designs and operations?

8. Another argument in favor of unconditional election, is founded on the Divine fore-knowledge of the conversion and sanctification of the elect. God could not have fore-known their conversion and sanctification unless they were certain. And this certainty must necessarily have depended on the Divine will. It is just as certain, therefore, that God has determined the conversion and sanctification of those who are saved, as that He has always fore-known their conversion and sanctification.

9. Another argument in favor of unconditional election is founded on the dependence of creatures. "We are not sufficient, of ourselves, to think any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God." Since men are constantly and entirely dependent upon God, it necessarily depends upon his will, whether they shall repent and be saved, or continue impenitent, and be lost. The necessary, constant and entire dependence of men, demonstrates not only the truth of predestination in general, but, of the unconditional election of those who are saved in particular.

10. Finally the Scriptures on this subject are plain and decisive. It is written, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." God says to his elect, 'A new heart will I give you, and a new Spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh and will give you an heart of flesh.' And again, 'I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them.' Why should God thus promise conversion and sanctification if they did not depend upon his will, and were not fore-ordained? "Even so then, at this present time also, there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace; otherwise work is no more work. What then, Israel hath obtained that which he seeketh for, but the election hath obtained it and the rest were blinded. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy; and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then, it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. Therefore hath he mercy, on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth."

In conclusion, I would state, that this review has not been dictated by any personal hostility against Dr. Fisk. I respect him for his *talents* and *honesty*. Nor is it intended to *injure* rather than *benefit* my brethren of the Methodist denomination. Nor is it intended for the benefit of Methodists alone. For I firmly believe that some Methodists are far more orthodox both in heart and head, than very many who *call themselves* Calvinists. This review is sincerely dedicated to Arminians of *every name and denomination*.





Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process.
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date: August 2005

PreservationTechnologies
A WORLD LEADER IN PAPER PRESERVATION

111 Thomson Park Drive
Cranberry Township, PA 16066
(724) 779-2111



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 014 651 770 5

